Valley Voice

Volume XXXV No. 10 • 21 May, 2015 www.ourvalleyvoice.com

Mooney Grove Continues to Receive Complaints

Catherine Doe

After the April 2 and May 7 *Valley Voice* articles concerning Mooney Grove, complaints about the park have continued.

Pam Mayo decided to take her foster child to Mooney Grove and ended up regretting her decision.

"I am a CASA, a Court Appointed Special Advocate for foster children," she said. "The judge orders a CASA for foster children who have had an extremely hard time. Her safety and happiness is with animals, who never let her down. Can you imagine taking an already broken child to THAT pond?

"Water covered in algae and several large dead fish floating with the ducks. The banks of the pond were littered with dead animals...including big black rats. My child came from a violent background and I was trying to figure out what to say. She seemed frozen. While I was trying to talk to her, my little dog jumped into the pond but I pulled her out before her face hit the water. We stopped at the ticket taker's place (on the way out) and I asked him why the dead animals weren't picked up and the diseases that had to be prevalent.

"He said, 'Oh, everything dies that comes here, the birds, ducklings and it's because we have botulism.' I wondered if my dogs would be OK. We came on a Saturday and on Sunday morning we discovered a very ill little dog. She was under the care of a vet from Companion Veterinary Clinic and with medication he prescribed, she appeared to begin the road to health one week later."

Mayo concluded, "There is nothing I can do about the child I stupidly brought with me. We will go for a picnic at another park next week."

On May 12, Mayo got a call from a man who identified himself as head of the parks, she said.

"He said they would never let dead animals lie around and they pick them up when they die," she said. "He said he was going to speak to the young man at the gate who gave me the wrong information.

"So, he denied everything. He was quite arrogant but not convincing. I did tell him I have the vet bill and diagnosis about my dog, and I can get a list of dead animals from the girl who was with me. He asked me where I got my information (regarding other complaints made against the park), I told him to look at

Picnic areas are diminishing at Mooney Grove park. Photo by Catherine Doe

MOONEY GROVE continued on **13 »**

Expansion Zone

- Expansion Zone is on the Northwest section of the campus site.
- Medical Imaging, Creekside Building, Checkers and Parking will nee d be removed
- The existing creek will need to be evaluated and storm water rerouted
- Floral Street will be abandoned
- Any utilities along Floral Street will need to be rerouted
- The Northwest addition will connect to the existing hospital through Acequia Wing as it was planned

Kaweah Delta Facing 2030 Deadline

Dave Adalian

Expand and refit, or go out of business. That's the choices faced by the Kaweah Delta Medical Center.

In 1994, the magnitude-6.7 Northridge Earthquake shook Southern California, leaving devastation in its wake. Among the buildings damaged or destroyed were 11 of the area's hospitals, rendering them unable to care for the wounded, as well as for patients already in their care, when disaster struck. In response, the State Legislature put new seismic regulations in place, giving all of California's hospitals until 2005 to ensure their emergency rooms and acute care facilities would be earthquake proof.

For Kaweah Delta, a relatively small institution in an area historically free from major quakes, the new regulations presented a challenge it simply could not meet. Extensions and exemptions were granted, giving the district until 2030 to comply, but now that deadline is looming on the distant horizon.

Fortunately, the Kaweah Delta

KAWEAH DELTA continued on **7 »**

Waters of Lake Kaweah Continue to Draw Recreation for Memorial Day

Nancy Vigran

The California drought has affected many things here in the South Valley. But it will not take away the traditional fun at the lake for Memorial Day!

"Our lake is doing really well," said Phil Deffenbaugh, park manager at Lake Kaweah. "As of a week ago, we still had more water than a year ago."

Managed by the Army Corp of Engineers, Lake Kaweah was sitting at 65,000 acre-feet last week, which while not as high as it could be, leaves a lot of water for recreational use.

The lake is indeed a cool spot for Memorial Day weekenders. For those looking to stay at Horsecreek Campground, if all sites have not been reserved, they are on a first come, first serve basis. The same follows for picnic areas, which cannot be reserved in advance, and those wanting to rent house or motor boats from the marina.

"A lot of people think we may not have much water," said Jeanne Howard, who owns Kaweah Marina with her husband, Brad. "We have quite a bit of water in the lake."

Howard grew up on the lake as her parents owned and operated the marina for more than 40 years before retiring. Howard has more knowledge of the lake and area, and its history, than most.

LAKE continued on **5 »**

Visalia City Council Chooses Voting District Map

Catherine Doe

After six months of workshops, hearings and debates, the Visalia City Council finally chose a voting district map during their May 18th meeting. Out of the four maps under consideration, the city council voted to approve NDC2, drawn by professional consultant Doug Johnson. The map sets the districts until the 2020 census when the boundaries may have to be adjusted.

The final four maps that survived several rounds of cuts by the council were heavily debated. Those four maps can be split into two groups. NDC2 and NDC3 were drawn by the National Demographics Corporation of Southern California. Map E and Map F1 were drawn by Visalia residents. Map E was drawn by former Visalia Planning Commission member, Vincent Salinas. Map F1 was submitted by the GI Forum, a Hispanic Veterans group. Robert Quiroz, a member of the GI forum, came to many of the city council meetings and hearings to support their map.

All four maps under consideration met the State and Federal Voting Rights Guidelines. But, there were two big differences; those drawn by the consulting group adjusted the district boundaries so that two council members would not be in one district. This is referred to as pairing. The community drawn maps focused on communities of interest, but both had one district shared by two incumbents.

Because none of the council members felt passionate about NDC3, the choice ultimately came down to NDC2, Map E and Map F.

Arguments in favor of maps drawn by consultant

There were strong and weak arguments for not choosing Map E and Map F1. The arguments in favor of NDC2

DISTRICTS continued on **4 »**

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Bad As This Sounds, There Is Far Worse

One reaches a certain age--not quite yet dotage--and the AARP starts sending mock membership cards as an enticement to join its ranks. Bad as this sounds, there is far worse. Big pharmaceutical conglomerates are seemingly now entreating me, over the airwaves and on television, to ask my doctor if my heart is healthy enough for sexual activity.

This is something I refuse to do--not least because I remain just fine, thank you very much. What I mean to say is I don't have a regular doctor to ask. Besides--what if I did and he said, "No." What then?

Separate porcelain bathtubs, I suppose, between which my wife and I would idly hold hands.

You have to ask yourself who is marketing that stuff. And you know what stuff I mean: Cialis. In an attempt to outstrip its competition, Viagra and Levitra--never a more clear case of sex selling--Cialis ends its latest commercial with a happy couple on a cliff top somewhere, facing the sunset together but sitting in separate tubs. This is one's inducement toward--indeed, one's reward for--selecting this product instead of a similar other? My wife says this more properly is an ad for abstinence. She's right. If it were up to me, the optics would not be so...sterile. If I were directing those commercials they would literally be steamy--picture a roiling night time hot tub, say, under the froth of whose surface anything might be going on. Now that's encouraging imagery for you.

And if not overtly encouraging, an ad should at least be intelligently subliminal. What's subliminal these days is the quickly spoken litany of caveats and potential side effects associated with taking any newly approved medication. Consider Propecia which, according to Drugs.com, "prevents the conversion of testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (DHT) in the body," and is "used for the treatment of male pattern hair loss on the vertex and the anterior mid-scalp area." Consider, too, Latuda which, according to its own website, is "a medication approved for bipolar depression."

Propecia is apparently toxic to women, who are not only enjoined from handling it but advised, "if a woman accidentally comes into contact with this medication from a broken or crushed tablet," to "wash the area with soap and water right away." Here's what this dangerous substance looks like, if any of you ladies out there come unwarily across it:

Bad as this sounds, there is far worse. For the men who take it, I mean. Sure, doing so might secure them a full and luxuriant head of hair, but among Drug.com's list of "less serious Propecia side effects" are "impotence, loss of interest in sex, trouble having an orgasm and abnormal ejaculation" along with the proviso: "The sexual side effects of Propecia may continue after you stop taking this medication." Great! To attract the ladies, presumably (while keeping them from it--and not out of shame, but for their safety) some fellow takes this potentially self-defeating concoction and--voila! Adieu les dames!

This, in sensibility, is commensurate with Latuda, which according to its website is "used to treat adult patients with depressive episodes in bipolar I disorder (bipolar depression) and schizophrenia." Have we not advanced past the point where, in seeking to help perhaps the most damaged--and therefore the most fragile amongst us--there not fewer than thrice in its own literature is a caution against the risk of "suicidal thoughts" as a result of taking this medication?

All of this nonsense can have at its base only one thing: Profit.

And profit is behind much of the nonsense in the world. Bad as this sounds, it's not just that money is the root of all evil--no, there is far worse. If something doesn't make any sense--if things don't add up--you can safely bet that somebody is making money. Evil need not be involved when stupidity will suffice: Propecia, Latuda, the pet rock.

Thus it is required that the pharmaceutical companies forewarn prospective consumers. I wish the same could be said about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) a free-trade agreement we are negotiating with Mexico, Canada, Japan, Singapore and seven other countries. But we--the public--are not to be privy to its details beforehand. And President Obama is pressing for fast-track approval of the deal.

Here's Senator Elizabeth Warren on the situation: *"Who will benefit from the TPP? One strong hint is buried in the fine print of the closely guarded draft. The provision, an increasingly common feature of trade agreements, is called 'Investor-State Dispute Settlement,' or ISDS. The name may sound mild, but don't be fooled. Agreeing to ISDS in this enormous new treaty would tilt the playing field in the United States further in favor of big multinational corporations. Worse, it would undermine U.S. sovereignty. ISDS would allow foreign companies to challenge U.S. laws--and potentially to pick up huge payouts from taxpayers--without ever stepping foot in a U.S. court. Here's how it would work. Imagine that the United States bans a toxic chemical that is often added to gasoline because of its health and environmental consequences. If a foreign company that makes the toxic chemical opposes the law, it would normally have to challenge it in a U.S. court. But with ISDS, the company could skip the U.S. courts and go before an international panel of arbitrators. If the company won, the ruling couldn't be challenged in U.S. courts, and the arbitration panel could require American taxpayers to cough up millions--and even billions--of dollars in damages."*

Propecia, Latuda, the pet rock, fast-tracking the TPP...

— Joseph Oldenbourg

Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Has Bush Lost His Front-Runner Position?

Who out there has been disappointed in Jeb Bush's performance so far in his presidential campaign? And when is the guy going to announce? This time four years ago, everyone who was going to run for president had already thrown their hat in the ring.

I just assumed that the two final candidates would be Gov. Bush and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. I guess it doesn't really matter, so I don't know why I am disappointed. Maybe it is because I don't want to be wrong, or because the idea of having another Bush/Clinton matchup is historically cool. It might be because Gov. Bush can string a sentence together of five words or more without making me cringe. He doesn't discuss whether President Obama is a Christian, bring up "legitimate rape" or advocate bombing Iran back to the seventh century.

All the Republicans are stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to winning their primary and winning the general election. But I thought Gov. Bush would be able to navigate those troubled waters a little more eloquently. Americans in general are against our invasion of Iraq, but the hard right still thinks it was a good idea. Gov. Bush should be able to deal with that conundrum better than the strategy of taking both sides. When called out on his flip-flopping, he blamed the fact that he misunderstood the question. That strategy is not going to work when he is sitting between Vladimir Putin and Raul Castro in a few years. "Oh, I'm sorry, did you say 'nuclear' missiles."

His next gaffe was declaring that he wasn't going to campaign in Iowa. What he meant was that he wasn't going to participate in the straw poll. But the media thought he was snubbing the state entirely, including the caucuses. And was it really necessary for him to make a big deal about not participating in a straw poll three months before the fact? I get it. Michelle Bachman won the Iowa Straw Poll in 2011 and what good did that do? Her campaign crumbled soon after. But as our possible future president he couldn't have a little more panache?

Lastly, his comment about how the Apple Watch could take the place of Obamacare might be true for some people, but is tone deaf if you are a presidential candidate. Did it dawn on him that the people who have been helped the most by Obamacare are the least likely to be able to afford the Apple Watch?

In regards to Iowa, another good reason to skip the state is that according to the latest poll he is coming in seventh with just five percent. Who is in the lead? Scott Walker and Gov. Bush's protégé Marco Rubio, the candidate I am really starting to believe might pull this off.

Hillary Frustrates Reporters

By the time this paper hits the racks it be will nearly a month since Sec. Clinton has answered a question from the press. Since she announced on April 12 she has only answered nine reporters' questions. Her avoidance of reporters is starting to get noticed and has become an issue for the left and the right.

According to ABC news, Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina has also taken note.

"Like Hillary Clinton, I'm also running for president, but unlike her, I'm not afraid to answer questions about my record. She's answered seven on-the-record questions since April 12th; I've answered over 200 on the record since Monday."

The New York Times has a new feature,"Questions for Hillary," dedicated to posing hypothetical questions that it would ask Sec. Clinton if she would let them.

Wisconsin governor Scott Walker has also been criticized for dodging reporters' questions. He has largely ducked encounters with the media since he told the *Washington Post* that he did not know whether President Obama was a Christian. Last week Gov. Walker took a trip to Israel and the press was conspicuously not invited.

Hillary 2.0 is focused on meeting with voters in roundtable settings rather than answering reporters' questions. When reporters ran after her van at one of her first official campaign stops last month in Iowa, Sec. Clinton didn't answer any questions but said, "We'll have lots of time to talk later," which is painfully true.

Does anybody really want to listen to Sec. Clinton talk to reporters? If I were flipping through the channels and saw her in a sit-down interview, I'd keep flipping. I'd rather watch Wolf Hall or My 600 Pound Life than listen to some boring conversation with a mainstream presidential candidate. Sec. Clinton has already made clear her campaign issues. All you have to do is read the recent polls and find out that a majority of Americans are for campaign finance reform, marriage equality and are disgusted with income inequality. Three guesses on what her campaign is about? Tulare County may not agree with those polls, and may think she is far left, but Tulare County hasn't elected a president since 2004.

The Clown Car Effect

Because I am so smart I figured out why there are so many candidates running in the Republican primary. Actually, read it in the *Fresno Bee* but I'll still take credit for understanding the concept.

Since 1960, starting with Vice President Richard Nixon, the Republican nomination has always gone to the next old white guy in line to the throne. But for this election there is no heir to the throne. Maybe Rick Santorum could make that claim but he is unelectable. He kind of makes me want to party like its 1399, you know before birth control and indoor plumbing.

Not having an heir apparent for the Republican nomination has created a vacuum--and candidates have been coming out of the woodwork.

The problem isn't the clown car effect, but the debates. How do you have a debate with 20 candidates on the stage? Normally the Republican National Party would eliminate those lowest in the

POLITICAL FIX continued on **10 »**

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Districts

Continued from p. 1

were spearheaded by council members Warren Gubler, Amy Shuklian, and Mayor Steve Nelson. Gubler was the least impassioned about which map to choose saying that simplicity won him over. He said that having two candidates in one district would make it very difficult to pick who runs in 2016 and who runs in 2018. He also frowned on the accusation of Gerrymandering saying that he and Shuklian lived a mile and a half apart, so it wouldn't be that difficult to put them into separate districts.

Nelson said he was troubled by the fact that Vincent's map had an island in the middle of the city. He said that the district could not expand when the city would have to adjust the boundaries after the 2020 census. NDC2 had room to grow in every district. He also was offended by the fact that the public had implied any council member would agree to a map that was gerrymandered. He said that "what is best for the city is at the heart of every decision made by all the council members. "

Because she disagreed with splitting the city into voting districts, Shuklian did not participate in the six-month process of choosing a map. May 18th was the first time she made her preference known, and it was NDC2, a map that would save her council seat. She felt that if the council chose map E or map F1 one sitting member would be eliminated from running for council again. She and Gubler also reiterated that the voters chose them, and the voters should be able to vote for them again.

During the process of drawing and narrowing down the maps, four of the council members brought up a variety of issues. Shuklian waited until the final meeting to choose a map. Though she may have been sincere in her motives, it did not go unnoticed by those who attended the meeting. She spoke out three times, and each time her opinion came back to the fact that a council member would not be able to run if Map E or Map F1 were chosen. It was no coincidence that she was talking about herself or Gubler.

Arguments in favor of choosing a community drawn map

Although Gubler pointed out that all four maps would do the job, there was a loyal contingent of the public that showed up at every hearing concerning the voting districts. They didn't always speak but the community members were obviously not there to support a map written by a consultant who lives in Glendale. They felt that, all things being equal, then the council should consider choosing a map written by a local Hispanic.

Council member Bob Link and Steve Collins preferred the maps drawn by the community. Link said he appreciated the fact that the maps were drawn by Hispanics, in light of the fact that Hispanics were the driving force behind the change to voting districts. His preference was for F1 because he liked the way the communities were divided. Link emphasized that he did not look at who might be running for office but only took into consideration what would be best for the city.

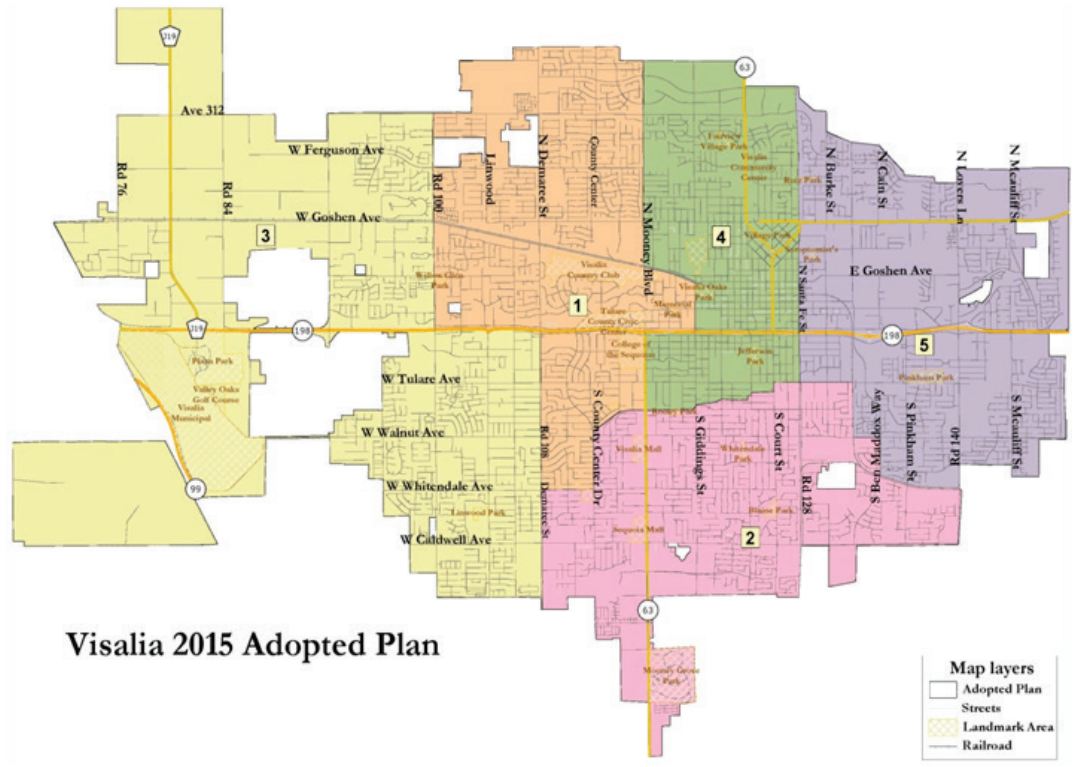
"In five or six years it's not going to make any difference who was sitting on the council in 2015," he said.

Rene Lapin, Visalia resident, echoed Link's sentiment. She pointed out that the incumbents may not even run again. She also said that, "your past voters will not vote the same way next time, and if they do, only a small sector of them will be randomly distributed throughout your new district."

Voters may prefer a new candidate who has not yet announced his/her desire to run. Most importantly, any candidate who plans on running in 2016, isn't getting any special consideration and neither should the sitting council, she said.

Salinas refuted the idea that one of the districts on his map was landlocked. The reality is that all the districts are landlocked by city limits and voting district boundaries. None of the five districts can jump their boundaries and grow. As the city grows, as will be seen in 2020 census, all districts will grow in population fairly equally.

Rene Lapin commented that the sudden concern with one district being "entrapped" was disingenuous and just plain silly.



"I see it as a straw man - and an excuse to choose a map that allows you to keep your seats," she said.

James Houk, a former city editor for the Visalia Times Delta, has been involved with the process since the Voting Rights Act suit was first filed. He said that Visalia's dirty little secret was keeping the city council election on odd numbered years so only a select group of citizens would vote. He said that may be a problem or it may not be, and that there are some council members he'd like to see on the council forever. The problem is, is that they all are trying to gerrymander the districts so that Shuklian and Gubler can keep their seats.

"If that is what you are going to do, then maybe you ought to quit right now because you are not doing your job," he said.

Rene Lapin pointed out that gerrymandering doesn't always mean districts turned into pretzels just to exclude or include groups of people. She said that gerrymandering "is universally understood as the redrawing of boundaries of a voting district --by incumbents --so that a group, party or official acquires an advantage at the expense of another."

The consultant stated that drawing the districts "so no one was voted off the island" was the goal and would fit Lapin's definition of gerrymandering.

Lapin has tried unsuccessfully to convince the city council that it is an obvious conflict of interest for incumbents to be voting on their own districts. She has been advocating for a redistricting committee to make the final decision.

Shuklian's assertion that if the council chose Map E or Map F1, one of the council members would not be able to run for council. That is partially true. Johnson said that in the case of map E one council member would have to wait two years before they could run again.

Final decision

The final vote came to a swift and anticlimactic end as Shuklian moved to approve map NDC2. Collins seconded her motion and it passed 5-0. Although Link and Collins had each said preferred the community drawn maps, their second choice was NDC2.

Because Shuklian and Link's at-large seats will be up next for election, the council chose their districts for the 2016 election. Districts 1 and 2, currently occupied by council members Shuklian and Link, respectively, will be up for election in 2016. Districts 3, 4 and 5, occupied by Gubler, Collins Nelsen, respectively, will be up for election in 2018.

This decision on which districts to chose for the 2016 election went against the advice of the National Demographics Corporation.

It suggested that council choose the Hispanic district for the 2016 or presidential election. Hispanics vote in greater numbers during presidential elections. District 4 currently has the highest Hispanic population in terms of total population (70% Hispanic), Hispanic citizen voting age population (57%) and Hispanic registered voters (54%).

District 4 is currently held by Greg Collins who has announced that he will not seek reelection.

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Chickens Unable To Cross Road…Yet

Catherine Doe

It was a temporary setback for chicken enthusiasts when the Visalia Planning Commission voted against the proposed ordinance allowing the fowl to be kept within city limits. The planning commission wasn't necessarily against the idea of chickens in a residential zone, but they felt that the ordinance "wasn't ready for prime time," as stated by Commissioner Roland Soltesz.

Last month, the Visalia City Council directed the planning commission to hold a public hearing to collect testimonies; from this, it was to make its recommendation. The result was a 3-1 vote rejecting the ordinance, with Commissioner Bret Taylor voting for it.

The commission's recommendation is not binding, and the city council can vote to approve an updated ordinance. The city council will be discussing and voting on the change to the city ordinance to allow chickens in residential areas at their regular June 1 meeting.

Commission members expressed their biggest complaint was on how the new ordinance was written. The suggested amendment to the Municipal Code simply changes hens from a farm animal to a household pet.

The planning commission saw this distinction as inadequate. The amendment did not require permits of licensing to raise chickens. The only restriction was limiting each household to four chickens and requiring that the chickens stay toward the rear of the resident's yard.

The planning commission expressed that the potential ordinance did not require any enclosure such as a coop, as unsatisfactory.

Out of all the towns reviewed that allowed chickens in residential areas, only Farmersville didn't require enclosures. Several commissioners commented on how they have had to dodge errant chickens while driving through Farmersville.

Jenifer Gomez, a Visalia resident, stated in a letter that the Farmersville animal control officer said the town has a real problem with feral chickens as residents tend to let them lose when moving from residence to residence.

Three other Tulare County towns allow chickens in residential areas--Exeter, Woodlake and Lindsay. All require chicken coops.

Five years ago the city of Tulare voted down allowing chickens in residential areas. The reasons cited were noise, odors, the possible spread of disease, lice and ticks, and attracting rodents.

Residents Support Chickens

There was a full house during the May 11 planning commission meeting. Fourteen people spoke, 12 in support and two against. Several letters were also submitted.

Kent Welsh, who works in agriculture, thought it was a good idea for city dwellers to raise chickens because so many people have no idea where their food comes from. Another supporter said that this would be his eight-year-old son's first year in 4H, and that the younger kids are assigned to raise a chicken. He said he grew up in a densely populated residential neighborhood in Orange County, but raised every kind of fowl from the time he was six years old until he left for college. He said it was good to give kids the responsibility of raising an animal.

A young mother with three kids said she could save on her food bill just by the eggs produced by her chickens. Her kids easily go through six eggs in a meal. Several people had a garden and expressed how much better chicken poop is over manure for fertilizer. They said that the chickens eat bugs and snails, generally clean their garden, and fertilize it. Chickens also eat table scraps cutting down on waste that will eventually go into landfills.

Gingi Freeman, who has been spearheading the movement to legalize miniature goats, also spoke in support of raising chickens. She said that chickens can supply essential sustenance and nutrition to Visalia's families.

"It is our God given right to practice self sufficiency and enjoy food freedom on our private property," she said.

Several supporters said that chickens generated no smell and only quietly made noise while laying their eggs. The two members of the public who spoke against chickens did not agree. They felt that if residents wanted to raise chickens they should move out into the country.

They said that chickens smell badly, spread disease, make noise and attract rodents. If the owner keeps the chicken enclosure clean this is not true, but the odds that the majority of chicken owners will keep their coops clean are long, someone said.

There are just as many irrespnsible pet owners, as evidenced by all the free running dogs and cats, as there are responsible ones.

Food 4 Less Recognizes Food Needs

In response to the need for food in the Central Valley, Food 4 Less has teamed up with Visalia Emergency Aid Food Pantry to battle hunger and food insecurity in our communities.

For the past 16 years, Food 4 Less has held a charity golf tournament hosted by Food 4 Less vendors, with 100 percent of the proceeds benefiting the communities they serve. Food 4 Less raised more than $40,000 at their golf tournament earlier this month with proceeds benefiting local food pantries, Visalia Emergency Aid as well as pantries in each of their store locations. In the past, these Food 4 Less fundraisers have generated more than $600,000 which have benefitted libraries, police programs, Boys and Girls Clubs and food pantries in our valley.

Food 4 Less is locally owned and operated by Gongco Foods. The Gong Family has deep roots in this valley and gives back to the communities they serve. Tom Gong, President of Food 4 Less, says they are proud to support the efforts of food pantries in our communities.

"Coming together is an important step in addressing food insecurity in the Valley," said Gong, "and we are honored to join the local fight against hunger."

"Tom Gong and Food 4 Less are so responsive when it comes to the needs of the Valley, we are fortunate to have such a great business partner located here," said Liz Wynn, executive director of Visalia Emergency Aid Food Pantry.

For more information or to find out how you can help, contact Iris East, development director, Visalia Emergency Aid Council, at.iris@veac.org, (559) 732-0101 or 559-859-3682

l-r: Liz Wynn, Padty Melom, Victor Villafana, Iris East.

Lake

Continued from p. 1

A tremendous amount of boaters bring their own crafts, using the lake for the day via its three boat ramps. Many locals have their own houseboats, kept at the marina's slips. But the marina also has more than 30 boats available for rent, some of which may still be available for the upcoming weekend.

Last week's fishing derby brought a lot of use to the lake, but hardly made a dent in the amount of fish in the lake.

"Fishing should be really good," Howard said, "the only thing is they have a lot to feed on. You have to be a good fisherman to catch them."

The lake has seen a lot of brine shrimp and young small fish for larger fish and ducks to feed upon.

Deffenbaugh agrees that there are "plenty of fish out there," he said. "But it's not like fishing in a barrel, you may have to work a bit for them."

The weekend is probably the busiest time of the year on the lake.

The California Department of Boating and Waterways offers the following warnings:

Water and alcohol do not mix – do not drink alcohol on the lake. Like in an automobile, it is illegal to drink and drive a boat.

Always wear a life jacket or personal flotation device – children and adults, as well as pets.

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to drive a motorboat.

Water skiing or towing is only allowed during daylight hours and along with the boat driver, there must be an observer, who is at least 12 years of age.

"It will be crowded," Deffenbaugh said, "so bring your patience with you."

And while the water level is lower than usual for the time of year, there are advantages to it.

"We don't have as much water," Howard said, "but we do have more parking."

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Agriculture

Rural Crime Adds to Pain from Drought

Christine Souza, CFBF

Thieves will steal anything they can get their hands on, from commodities and cattle to equipment, fuel and tools. Now, as California endures a fourth consecutive year of drought, law enforcement officers remind farmers to be vigilant and check irrigation pumps, brass fittings and steel pipes, which remain hot items for thieves.

"Farmers have less water to irrigate their crops and when they have a pump that is damaged or they find during an irrigation cycle that a pump is disabled, it may take more water to make that crop healthy again," said Yuba Community College District Chief of Police John Osborne, a member of the California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force.

Osborne said members of the task force, at a recent meeting, described metal theft as an ongoing issue in agricultural communities throughout the valley, even though incidents have slowed somewhat with a decline in the market value of copper.

Fresno County farmer Matthew Efird, who grows almonds, walnuts, winegrapes and raisins at the family farm in Caruthers, said he depends on a drip-irrigation system to maintain those permanent crops.

"Anytime that we get a pump vandalized, obviously that is going to put us behind as far as our irrigation schedule," Efird said.

"For farmers of young plants or newly planted almonds, that (inability to irrigate due to a damaged pump) would be a lot more critical," he said. "If I was in my first irrigation cycle after planting a block of trees, and all of a sudden my well went down or if my wire was stolen and I couldn't get to that orchard for a week, that would be detrimental."

Efird said he knows his local sheriff's detectives by name because rural crime is such an issue. To repair an irrigation pump from which the copper wire has been stolen, he said, costs $1,500 at minimum—and if the pump or well was damaged during the theft, the cost could start at $5,000.

As California growers face reduced water supplies due to the ongoing drought, repairing a pump that has had the copper wire stripped out puts added stress on already busy pump-repair companies.

"We have an upstanding relationship with our pump company and sometimes it can be upwards of a week wait, depending on how severe our need is for water, because they are being pulled in so many different directions," Efird said. "It's not just the out-of-pocket loss and the frustration of having to deal with it, it is also the response time from the pump companies."

Clayton Jacobsen, owner of Fresno-based Diversified Ag Enterprises, specializes in installation of new irrigation pumps and conducts pump repairs for growers from Madera to Dinuba.

"I've only been in business for a year, but we are so busy we can't see straight right now," Jacobsen said, attributing the demand not so much to theft, "but the water table is going down and as the water table goes down, you need to have your pumps reworked."

San Joaquin County winegrape and cherry grower Joe Valente said that in his area, farmers interested in pump repairs are placed on a waiting list.

"Pump repair companies are very, very busy, and if we wind up hitting a hot spell, then everyone will want to start irrigating at once," Valente said. "It is not only your pump company; it could be your utility provider and how soon they can get out. If there is enough damage and you have to replace the switchbox, then you are also talking about the county inspector."

Valente said wire was stripped from one of the farm's irrigation pumps last fall, and he held off having it repaired so it wouldn't be targeted again. For pumps that are hit routinely, the farm has invested in various locking mechanisms, he said.

To assist farmers and rural detectives in dealing with the costly issue of metal theft, the California Farm Bureau Federation supports Assembly Bill 1019, by Eduardo Garcia, D-Coachella. The legislation would create a Metal Theft Task Force to provide additional resources to local law enforcement to focus solely on metal theft.

Since the recession in 2008, Osborne said, counties and cities have experienced a reduction in resources, making it more challenging to maintain staffing levels and, therefore, dedication to prevention of agricultural crime.

"We would be in favor of any additional resources that we can dedicate toward metal theft and other agricultural-related crime," Osbourn said.

Although reports of metal theft decrease when the price of metals dips, Sgt. Ryan Hushaw of the Fresno County Sheriff's Office Agricultural Crimes Task Force said metal theft "is always a problem."

"A majority of the cases that we handle

RURAL CRIME continued on **9 »**

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Kaweah Delta

Continued from p. 1

Health Care District has a plan.

"We need the community to understand we're replacing the hospital," said KDHCD CEO Lindsay Mann. "It will be fully a replacement of the Mineral King Wing."

No longer good enough

SB1953, the law passed after the destruction of the Northridge Quake, requires emergency rooms and acute care facilities be "standing and fully functional" in the aftermath of a major trembler. For the Mineral King Wing, the hospital's original building that was opened in 1969 and still houses 273 acute care beds, the requirement signaled the end of its useful life as a hospital.

"They (the state) have determined emphatically we cannot use the Mineral King Wing for acute care," Mann said. "It needs to be standing and fully functional. Standing is different from fully functional."

While KDHCD's leadership lobbied Sacramento for further exemptions and more time, they were not idle at home. The medical center expanded to the west in 2004 with a multistory building at West Street and Mineral King Avenue, and the new Acequia Wing -- containing many of the center's state-of-the-art treatment labs, operating rooms and its expanded ER -- was opened in 2009. The hospital additions made so far add 308 patient beds, and while this might seem like an adequate response to the new seismic requirements, it actually falls far short, Mann said.

"You need all the support services," he said, "operating rooms, pharmacy, the labs, even dietary. You might survive a disaster, but after three days people are going to want something to eat."

Many of those support services could be housed in the Mineral King Wing, but the cost of retrofitting former patient rooms into offices and labs may prove prohibitive, while the newly opened wings simply don't have room for them. So, a 10-year plan has been devised that will give Visalia and the surrounding communities the care they need, provided voters agree to help foot the bill.

Renaissance Already Underway

KDHCD is already well into planning the expansion it must have to continue functioning, with their consultants already at work to define the scope, timeline and cost of the project. That preliminary work should be complete by the end of summer, Mann said.

"We will have what will lead to architectural plans," he said. "Not just foggy generalities. We're going to know."

Following project scoping, the design process will take two years to complete, followed by another two years for the state to approve the plans. The remaining six years of the 10-year plan will be given over to the bidding process, construction and finally occupying the new building well within the 14 years remaining before the hospital must be in compliance with SB1953.

But, all of that is predicated on being able to pay for the expansion. The district, Mann said, has a plan for that, too.

Because the district knew it would have large future expenses associated with the expansion and refit, it's been saving its pennies and will use its reserves to start the project. And, said Mann, the district, because of that financial acumen,

has been given an A3 stable bond rating by Moody's Investment Service, which it will use to issue bonds against its future reserves.

"It's really a forever thing," Mann said of the district's financial health. "We've focused on being financially strong as long as I've been here, 37 years. It's bedrock to what we're doing."

Going to the Voters

The district will also seek out grants from state and federal agencies, and will be looking for donations, such as those that paid for the medical center's new helipad and it's robotic surgery center. But, even with those sources, the cost of the new construction will exceed the district's resources, forcing it to turn to voters for approval of general obligation bonds. That vote will require a better than two-thirds approval, and Mann is counting on the public to see the absolute necessity of passing the issue.

"At 67 percent, people have to have an inspired view of this being their hospital," he said. "Another driver is that it is equally important to provide services you find in the Mineral King Wing."

With KDHCD continuing to expand the services it provides to Visalia and surrounding communities, there is also a need to expand capacity at the medical center while maintaining high standards of comfort, safety and quality of service.

"The vision that drives us is elevating the services available at Kaweah Delta," Mann said.

Relying on Past Performance

That voters might be hesitant to tax themselves is something Mann understands, but he believes those concerns should be offset by the district's track record.

"We have a theme of doing these projects on-time, on-budget," he said. "The entire West Campus (KDHCD's cluster of medical facilities at Akers Street and Cypress Avenue) was built on-time, on-budget."

KDHCD, he said, is well aware of its responsibility to continuing to provide the care residents within its boundaries must have and have counted on for decades.

"We understand the sacred trust with the community," he said. "We have delivered, and we will deliver."

But, that can only be done with the support of two-thirds of voters. Should they fail to fund this replacement of the Mineral King Wing, Visalia and surrounds will find itself without a medical center.

"We would not have a hospital to provide services to the community," Mann said. "It's just a fact."

Sierra Bancorp Reports Earnings

Sierra Bancorp (Nasdaq: BSRR), parent of Bank of the Sierra, today announced its unaudited financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2015. Sierra Bancorp recognized net income of $3.738 million in the quarter, for a return on average assets of 0.93% and a return on average equity of 8.06%.

Net income was slightly lower than in the first quarter of the prior year due in large measure to the impact of non-recurring items and a higher income tax accrual, but diluted earnings per share increased to $0.27 in the first quarter of 2015 from $0.26 in the first quarter of 2014 as a result of stock repurchases over the course of the past year.

Income statement highlights for the quarter include robust net interest income driven by a large increase in average interest-earning assets, and relatively strong non-interest income resulting in large part from a higher level of fee-generating customer activity.

Non-interest expense was higher due to substantial gains on the sale of OREO which helped offset costs in the first quarter of 2014, as well as higher core processing costs subsequent to our conversion in February 2014, higher personnel expense, and other operating cost increases associated with our acquisition in late 2014.

Total assets were up $96 million, or 6%, during the first quarter of 2015, due to net growth of $95 million in gross loan balances. Loan balances exceeded the milestone level of $1 billion for the first time in the history of the Bank, and growth for the quarter was favorably impacted by increased utilization on mortgage warehouse lines as well as the purchase of $28 million in residential mortgage loans in March.

Total nonperforming assets, including nonperforming loans and foreclosed assets, were reduced by close to $2 million, or 7%, during the quarter. Total deposits increased $24 million, or 2%, due to a $37 million increase in core non-maturity deposits that was partially offset by a reduction in time deposits. Non-deposit borrowings increased $77 million.

"Growth during the first quarter of 2015 was robust as we realized significant increases in loans and customer deposits, and these positive trends contributed to solid net income for the quarter," noted Kevin McPhaill, President and CEO. "With the acquisition of Santa Clara Valley Bank now complete, we have a strong team in place and anticipate growth opportunities in that area and throughout our footprint. Moving into the second quarter, we will continue to focus on quality loan and deposit growth in all of our markets," concluded McPhaill.

Financial Highlights

Net income declined by $61,000, or 2%, in the first quarter of 2015 relative to the first quarter of 2014, and a higher tax accrual was the ultimate factor in this unfavorable variance.

Pre-tax income was actually $222,000 higher in the first quarter of 2015, and there were also significant variances in the components of pre-tax income, including some items of a non-recurring nature, as noted below.

Net interest income was up by $2.503 million, or 20%, for the comparative quarters, due in part to an increase of $211 million, or 16%, in average interest-earning assets. Also having a positive effect was a quarter-over-quarter increase of 12 basis points in our net interest margin, which resulted from a shift in earning assets from relatively low-yielding investments into higher-yielding loan balances as well as substantial non-recurring income recognized in the first quarter of 2015. Non-recurring interest income, which is comprised primarily of net interest recoveries on non-accrual loans combined with penalties and accelerated fee recognition on loan prepayments, totaled $366,000 in the first quarter of 2015 relative to only $8,000 in the first quarter of 2014. Another factor in the Company's results of operations was our loan loss provision, which was zero in the first quarter of 2015 relative to $150,000 in the first quarter of 2014.

Total non-interest income rose by $300,000, or 8%, for the quarterly comparison. Service charges on deposit accounts, which represent the largest portion of non-interest income, were up by $105,000, or 6%, due to fees earned from increased activity on business deposit accounts, partially offset by a drop in overdraft income.

Bank-owned life insurance (BOLI) income was also up $70,000, or 24%, due primarily to fluctuations in income on BOLI associated with deferred compensation plans.

Investment gains were lower, however, as we realized only $16,000 in gains on the sale of investments in the first quarter of 2015 relative to $104,000 in the first quarter of 2014.

Other non-interest income increased $213,000, or 15%, in the first quarter of 2015, due primarily to higher debit card interchange income and increases in other activity-based fees.

Total non-interest expense increased by $2.731 million, or 25%, for the comparative quarters. The largest component of non-interest expense, salaries and benefits, increased by $910,000, or 15%, due primarily to personnel increases associated with our acquisition, regular annual salary increases, strategic additions to business development staff in the first quarter of 2015, and higher group health insurance expense.

A lower level of deferred salaries directly related to successful loan originations also contributed to the increase in compensation costs in the first quarter of 2015, but that unfavorable variance was largely offset by a $103,000 drop in overtime costs related to the impact of our core banking software conversion in the first quarter of 2014.

The change in salaries and benefits was further impacted by a $44,000 increase in deferred compensation expense accruals related to the aforementioned increase in BOLI income.

Occupancy expense increased by $156,000, or 10%, for the quarter, due primarily to costs associated with our newly-acquired branches. Other non-interest expenses increased by $1.665 million, or 51%, due in part to a $642,000 unfavorable swing in net OREO costs resulting from substantial OREO gains in the first quarter of 2014.

Costs associated with our new core banking software and our acquisition contributed to increases in data processing expense, deposit costs and supply costs totaling $673,000 for the first quarter of 2015 relative to the first quarter of 2014.

Other significant factors affecting the quarter-over-quarter overhead expense comparison include the following: a $190,000 increase in debit card losses resulting from an increase in fraudulent transactions; residual acquisition costs in the first quarter of 2015, totaling $112,000; lower FDIC assessment accruals; non-recurring credits of $104,000 against telecommunications costs which were received in the first quarter of 2014; and a $44,000 increase in deferred compensation expense accruals for our directors (related to the aforementioned increase in BOLI income).

The Company's provision for income taxes was 29% of pre-tax income in the first quarter of 2015, relative to 25% in the first quarter of 2014.

The higher tax provisioning in 2015 is primarily the result of higher taxable income and a declining level of available tax credits, including those generated by our investments in low-income housing tax credit funds as well as certain hiring tax credits.

Income subject to federal income taxes, which excludes interest income generated by most of our municipal investments and income associated with bank-owned life insurance, was approximately $200,000 higher in the first quarter of 2015 than in the first quarter of 2014.

Balance sheet changes during the first three months of 2015 include an increase in total assets of $96 million, or 6%, due to growth in loans which primarily occurred in the latter part of the quarter.

Gross loans increased by $95 million, or 10%, as a result of increased utilization on mortgage warehouse lines and the quarter-end purchase of $28 million in residential mortgage loans.

Agricultural production loans were the only other major category of loans to experience growth in the first quarter of 2015, with an increase of $755,000, or 3%, but Management anticipates that growth in commercial real estate loans will accelerate in the second quarter based on deals currently in process.

Total nonperforming assets, including non-accrual loans and foreclosed assets, reflect a reduction of $2 million, or 7%, during the first quarter of 2015. The Company's ratio of nonperforming assets to loans plus foreclosed assets was 2.15% at March 31, 2015 compared to 2.53% at December 31, 2014, although the ratio reduction is primarily the result of higher total loan balances outstanding.

All of the Company's impaired assets are periodically reviewed, and are either well-reserved based on current loss expectations or are carried at the fair value of the underlying collateral, net of expected disposition costs. In addition to nonperforming assets, the Company had $11 million in loans classified as restructured troubled debt (TDRs) that were included with performing loans as of March 31, 2015, a reduction of $1 million relative to TDRs at December 31, 2014.

The Company's allowance for loan and lease losses was $10.7 million as of March 31, 2015, down slightly from $11.2 million at December 31, 2014 due to the charge-off of certain impaired loan balances against previously-established reserves. Net loans charged off against the allowance totaled $530,000 in the first quarter of 2015 compared to $336,000 in the first quarter of 2014.

Due to loan growth in portfolio segments with low historical loss rates and credit quality improvement in the remainder of the loan portfolio, in addition to residential mortgage loans that were purchased at their fair values and thus initially required no loss reserves, the overall allowance declined to 1.01% of total loans at March 31, 2015 from 1.16% at December 31, 2014.

Management's detailed analysis indicates that the Company's allowance for loan and lease losses should be sufficient to cover credit losses inherent in loan and lease balances outstanding as of March 31, 2015, but no assurance can be given that the Company will not experience substantial future losses relative to the size of the allowance.

Deposits reflect growth of $24 million, or 2%, during the quarter ended March 31, 2015, due to an increase of $37 million, or 3%, in core non-maturity deposits that was partially offset by time deposit runoff, including the maturity of $5 million in wholesale brokered deposits.

Junior subordinated debentures remain the same, but other short-term interest-bearing liabilities increased by $77 million during the first quarter of 2015 due to borrowings required to support our strong loan growth.

Total capital increased by $1.4 million, or 1%, to $188 million at March 31, 2015.

The increase resulted primarily from the addition of net income to retained earnings, net of the impact of cash dividends paid and the Company's repurchase of 73,943 shares in the first quarter of 2015.

As recently announced, the Company has approved an additional 500,000 shares for repurchase due to the completion of the previous plan in April.

The Company's risk-based capital ratios, while still robust, dropped during the quarter due to the increase in loans and the impact of new Basel III capital rules that are being phased in commencing January 1, 2015.

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Drought Plunges State into More Regulatory Action

Kate Campbell, CFBF

As California sinks deeper into drought, officials are taking an increased number of actions to protect dwindling water supplies. In addition to requiring a 25 percent overall cutback in municipal water use, the state began building an emergency salinity barrier on the San Joaquin River in Contra Costa County last week, to prevent saltwater intrusion that could threaten freshwater supplies—an action last taken in 1977.

Next week, the State Water Resources Control Board holds a public workshop to take comment on its drought-related activities, which have included a cutoff of water diversions by water right holders—known as curtailments—and the likelihood of additional action.

"This is the drought of the century, with greater impact than anything our parents and grandparents experienced, and we have to act accordingly," board chairwoman Felicia Marcus said. "We have to face the reality that this drought may continue and prepare as if that's the case."

A 25 percent savings in potable urban water use amounts to more than 1.2 million acre-feet of water during the next nine months, the water board estimated. The emergency regulation sets a target water use of 55 gallons per person, per day, and notes that 50 percent of total residential water use is outdoors—in some cases, up to 80 percent.

The mandatory cut in municipal water use could have had a more damaging impact on small farms that rely on municipal water supplies, but the San Diego County Farm Bureau, California Farm Bureau Federation and others helped convince the water board to allow municipal water districts delivering water to commercial agriculture to subtract the amount of agricultural water delivered from their urban conservation requirements. Under the emergency regulation adopted by the board, those districts will have to reduce usage by commercial agriculture by an amount to be determined by local agencies.

San Diego County Farm Bureau Executive Director Eric Larson said that under the board's original proposal, farmers in the county who buy water from municipal agencies faced water reductions ranging from 20 percent to as high as 38 percent, but will now see less-stringent cuts.

In San Diego County, he said, "we expect that local decision to be in the 15 percent range that our farmers will have to reduce, so that's a big difference from 38 percent."

Many farmers served by municipal water agencies had already made dramatic strides in water efficiency in recent years, in response to earlier water cutbacks and rising rates. San Diego County is one place where many farmers buy high-cost, potable water. Agricultural water analysts say other farm users might not have been directly affected by the board's emergency regulation, in cases where those users buy "raw" or untreated water or use groundwater or other local sources rather than potable water from an urban supplier.

The water board announced it will hold its public workshop on drought actions in Sacramento on May 20. The workshop will provide the public an opportunity to comment on subjects that include the "temporary urgency change petition" process associated with modifications to state and federal water project operations, the emergency rock barrier being built in the delta, various drought-related curtailment actions taken in recent weeks, and potential, additional curtailments in the weeks to come.

Already, thousands of California farms and ranches with junior water rights have been ordered to stop diverting water as the growing season advances. The state water board has warned, however, that further cutoffs are coming—including possible curtailment of senior water rights.

"Farmers and ranchers should expect additional curtailments, but there are legal issues as to who may order those cuts and whether the state water board has authority to send cease-and-desist orders for legal diversions by pre-1914 water right holders, among other uncertainties," said Chris Scheuring, CFBF environmental attorney.

Representatives of pre-1914 and riparian water-right holders have argued that these rights are not within the state water board's jurisdiction, because the rights were established before the board was formed. However, observers say there is uncertainty as to whether the board's emergency powers grant it authority it would not otherwise possess.

Hydrographs prepared by the board using data from flow gauges in the Sacramento and San Joaquin river watersheds project that there will be little "natural flow" through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta within a few weeks—meaning water in the river channels likely will be primarily from released reservoir storage that includes flows to meet legal demands.

"The hydrology is severe—as bad as we've ever seen—but curtailment of senior water-right holders is without precedent," Scheuring said. "Still, the curtailment process based on the seniority system is time-tested and has shown it functions in dry years, as well as wet ones.

"We've never been in this place before," he continued. "We've never gone this deep into the ranking of water rights seniority, at least on anything near this scale."

In a broad sense, curtailment of junior right holders, which occurred both in 2014 and this year, can be expected in dry years and is "legally unremarkable," Scheuring said, "but that doesn't take away from the fact that the drought is severe and farmers and ranchers are struggling."

"If anything, this crisis underscores the need for more water supplies," he said. "Farm Bureau continues to press for new storage and other supply enhancements that will add to the system, so we don't continue to find ourselves in this situation in the future."

This article courtesy of the California Farm Bureau Federation

Rural Crime

Continued from p. 6

somehow have a nexus to metal," Hushaw said. "We have two full-time investigators that only deal with metal theft. They visit metal recycling yards to make sure recyclers are abiding by state law, and to ensure that if any suspicious material comes in, that they are keeping receipt of that and identifying who is bringing that in."

To prevent the theft of metals on the farm, rural crime detectives recommend that farmers conduct routine checks of their pumps, mark as much equipment as possible—including the pump itself—with their owner-applied number and, most importantly, report thefts right away.

Something new happening in the valley, Hushaw said, is a slight rise in the theft of the actual pump itself.

"Thieves are actually unbolting the entire pump system from the cement that it is anchored into, or we've even seen where they've used a cutting torch to take the whole pump," Hushaw said. "I speculate that maybe they are selling these pumps on the black market or perhaps they are cutting them up with a torch and recycling the metal.

"If a pump is out there, a thief is going to try and break into it. In a drought situation, if growers are not using their pumps as often, they may sit out there unchecked, so we would just recommend that someone is out there checking the pumps to make sure that they are not the victim of a theft," Hushaw said.

This article courtesy of the California Farm Bureau Federation

Political Fix

Continued from p. 3

polls. But because Ms. Fiorina and Dr. Ben Carson hold no elected office, and have no platform to get on the news every week, they may never get high enough in the polls. To eliminate the only woman and African American would make for bad optics.

I think enough candidates will drop out to get the number down to 16. My suggestion is to put them all on stage as if they were playing Hollywood Squares, in a tic-tac-toe format four-by-four. The moderator could ask each candidate a question and the audience could vote on if he or she were telling the truth or not. Those candidates who were the worst BSers would be eliminated from the next debate. Voila!

Considering the fierce competition for the nomination, they sure are taking their own sweet time announcing. The next politician to announce will be former Texas Governor Rick Perry on June 4. He will also add to the diversity of the Republican slate of candidates by being the first presidential candidate to run while under federal indictment. On Friday, Aug. 15, 2014, a Travis County grand jury handed down two indictments against then-Gov. Rick Perry. The indictments allege he abused the powers of his office.

The Senator from South Carolina, Lindsey Graham, is expected to announce before Rick on June 1.

Who Is That?

Remember Neel Kashkari ? Do you know who Rocky Chavez is?

It's the nobody endorsing nobody syndrome. Neel Kashkari was the Republican sacrificial lamb in the 2012 gubernatorial election. Rocky Chavez is an assemblyman from Oceanside. Mr. Kashkari just made a formal announcement of his endorsement of Mr. Chavez for the U.S. Senate. The assemblyman has decided to run against Attorney General Kamala Harris for Sen. Barbara Boxer's seat in 2016.

Mr. Chavez has spent most of his career in the U.S. Marines and is mounting a long-shot campaign for a senate seat. In the seven weeks since Mr. Chavez entered the race, the only other semi-known Republican to announce support for his candidacy is Kevin Faulconer, the mayor of San Diego.

No-name number two is Steve Westley. Mr. Westley announced that he is close to declaring his candidacy for governor against the popular and handsome Gavin Newsom – the only declared candidate for governor in 2018.

The last time Mr. Westley was in the swim was in 2006, when he was a top candidate in the **Democratic** primary for governor. He was defeated in the Democratic primary by **California State Treasurer Phil Angelides**, who later lost to **Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger**.

Mr. Westley is hoping that the change in the voting system will work to his advantage. His defeat in 2006 came during a traditional Democratic primary. With the advent of a system in which the top two vote-getters advance to a runoff he could be running against Mr. Newsome in the general election.

He would be considered the more moderate candidate and would perform well with California's growing number of independent voters. The open primary may just the ticket for a moderate, pro-business suburbanite.

This and That

Governor Brown likes his women

Roughly half of Governor Jerry Brown's state board and commissions appointees are women. The governor normally makes 300 appointments. The advantage of appointing women is that many people use the boards as a jumping off point to run for elected office.

A woman's advocate said, "Sen. Dianne Feinstein, she was in appointed office before she was elected. So for a lot of women it's a great opportunity to get their feet wet, to understand public policy, to understand what it means to be a policy maker."

Dr. Ben Carson looses teeth

Ben Carson had a brutal week late May as a Republican presidential candidate. He's repeatedly struggled with the basics of American civics, he's been incoherent during major media interviews, and in South Carolina, he attended a breakfast where he actually lost two teeth.

The question still remains were they dentures or were they his real teeth?

Ms. Clinton against Citizens United

Choosing Supreme Court justices has always been a big factor in making the political party not in power very nervous. The most concerning issue between Republicans and Democrats has normally been nominating justices that will uphold the right to choose. Sec. Clinton has adopted a different rubric. According to Associated Press, she says she'd make Supreme Court picks aimed at campaign finance reform.Hillary Rodham Clinton Charlie Neibergall / Associated Press

"Hillary Rodham Clinton talks to supporters at a home in Mason City, Iowa.

Clinton vows to appoint Supreme Court justices who 'do not protect the right of billionaires to buy elections.' Hillary Rodham Clinton was clear Monday during a campaign stop about one quality she would expect from her nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court if she were to become president – an overhaul of the rapidly evolving campaign finance system that is giving extremely wealthy donors even more say in presidential contests."

"The Supreme Court made a grave error with Citizens United," Sec. Clinton said before a roomful of party activists in Mason City, Iowa. "I will do everything I can to appoint Supreme Court justices who protect the right to vote and do not protect the right of billionaires to buy elections."

Her position is a bit ironic because she is poised to to "shatter fundraising records and push the boundaries of campaign finance law further than any Democrat who has ever run for the White House."

Visalia hitting the big time

Visalia's population has topped the 130,000! There are now 130,753 people living here, according to information released earlier this week by the California Department of Finance.

Mathis Presents First Bill to Assembly Committee

Catherine Doe

Freshman Assemblyman, Devon Mathis, presented his first bill (AB 144 – Illegal Dumping) before the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

The Public Safety Committee, which traditionally votes according to party lines, displayed overwhelming support of AB144 with a unanimous vote of 7-0.

Mathis stated, "AB 144 is an important bill to address the problem of illegal dumping on private property."

Mathis continued, "Illegal dumping is often a crime of opportunity and occurs in remote or low-income neighborhoods.

When illegal dumping occurs, the damage to neighborhoods and the environment can be severe."

On behalf of Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux, Sheriff Captain Keith Douglas testified in support of Mathis' bill, stating, "AB 144 will address this growing problem of illegal dumping. Not only does this create blight in our community, but dumping also poses an undue burden on law enforcement officials.

When a call comes in for illegal dumping, precious time, energy and resources are used that could, and should, be used elsewhere."

Chairman Quirk enthusiastically supported AB144 and stated, "This is a great bill and I thank Assemblyman Mathis for working with the committee."

Assemblyman Mathis thanked Chairman Quirk and the committee staff for their unanimous support.

The hard work on Mathis' first bill resulted in language not only agreeable to law enforcement and the Tulare District Attorney, but to committee members who agreed that imposing a misdemeanor on the fourth and subsequent illegal dumping violations creates a deterrent which will make sure illegal dumpers "Don't Trash California."

Providers needed in Tulare County

Seeking loving individuals to support an adult with special needs.

Must have spare bedroom.
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Meet Wednesdays at 3pm.
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Next deadline:
28 May, 2015

Visalia Mandated to Cut Water Use 32%

Catherine Doe

Visalia residents showed up in force the evening of May 14 to a California Water Service public hearing. According to Scott Bailey from Cal Water, 537 people attended the meeting at the Marriot Hotel to find out how much they were going to have to cut their water consumption.

Cal Water announced that residents and businesses were going to receive a water budget based on what they used in 2013. Based on that number residents and businesses will be expected to reduce the amount of water they use by 32 percent from what they consumed in 2013. Any amount they use above and beyond that amount will face surcharges. The surcharge will be $2.98 for 748 gallons of water they use above their prescribed amount.

There has been criticism about Cal Water's system of basing residents' water budgets on their use in 2013. It rewards those who have not been conserving. Those water wasters will start out at a higher mean than those who have been conscientious.

Cal Water said that there were several different methods in which they could calculate how much each person had to cut. Bailey said that this was deemed the most fair. Cal Water liked the fact that this method looked at everyone's use individually when they came up for each amount.

Cal Water said they will assign staff to help adjust water budgets for those who cannot cut water for health or safety reasons. The mandatory 32 percent cut in water starts June 1. Visalia, Porterville, Tulare, Dinuba and Hanford are required to cut their water use by 32 percent. Exeter, Corcoran, Clovis and Kingsburg must reduce their water use by 36 percent. Fresno has to cut back by 28 percent.

Cal Water is a privately owned company that operates the water system for Visalia and parts of Goshen.

They have not completed developing their surcharge plan and anyone can appeal their prescribed water budget. Residents can also appeal any surcharges levied.

Now Hiring!

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Experience required
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Send resume to:
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Visalia Council Sends Sign Ordinance Back for Revisions

Catherine Doe

The Visalia City council held a work session/public hearing on the city's sign ordinance on May 18. The hearing was held at the convention center in anticipation of a large crowd. Attendance was lower than expected and it was hypothesized that was because the work sessions are held at 4pm when the most effected constituents were still at work. After a more than two-hour discussion, it was moved to discuss the sign ordinance again on July 20. Next time it will take place in the evening during the regular council meeting at 7pm.

Vice Mayor Warren Gubler commented that the draft ordinance is a good document and that he hoped the city could move forward. Council Member Greg Collins also thought that the draft ordinance was workable and only needed some tweaking.

The businesses that seemed happiest with the draft sign ordinance were the real estate companies. Bret Taylor, Visalia City planning commissioner, and Mike Lane, developer, both approached the council to express their pleasure with the ordinance and to thank them for working with the industry.

The two biggest problems with the draft ordinance, council felt, were window signs and temporary signs.

Visalia Chamber of Commerce lead the charge to have the city council rewrite that portion of the ordinance that regulated window signs.

Gail Zurek, chamber president said, "The ordinance is not perfect but I think it could be perfect."

She said it was possible to have an ordinance where business can thrive and residents can be proud of their community.

Zurek explained that the ordinance requires that 30 percent of a window can be covered but 70 percent has to be free of any covering. She and some business owners had several examples in which this was bad economic practice. Zurek pointed out that businesses that cater to a bilingual crowd need to have their signs in two languages which take twice the space.

She also said that window covering are also for security and energy savings. One example was jewelry stores that use signs to block outsiders view into the store while patrons are making large purchases.

Another business owner says that his energy bill went down by 70 percent, when he covered the windows with a special material to keep the sun rays out. He said that some of the material does have some writing on it but that it is esthetically done.

The second issue that needed more discussion and research were the rules revolving around temporary signs. The draft ordinance says that a business can put out a temporary sign for 60 days, four times a year, with 30 days lapse in between. Mayor Nelson pointed out that the ordinance allowed a total of 240 days.

"If you are putting a sign out for 60 days, four times a year, that's a permanent sign," he said.

Bill Balsey, a Visalia resident, said he was particularly irritated by the fact that all downtown businesses could place an A-frame sign out on the sidewalk. He said that Visalia has the chance of losing its title of Jewel of the Valley to Atwater, who has an intelligent sign ordinance. They only allow A-frames in their downtown to announce special sales.

Councilwoman Amy Shuklian said, she feels it's the temporary signs that make the city look trashy and that she could not support the ordinance they way it is currently written.

Passing any sign ordinance will create its own challenges. The biggest is how does the city enforce all the rules?

When Balsey complained six years ago that the sign ordinance wasn't being enforced, Tracy Robertshaw, code enforcement officer, said that it is her department's lowest priority.

Councilmember Link asked "How much work do we want to give code enforcement."

Council members already have to deal with the homeless, water, residents and pets, among many other issues. Link was having a hard time imagining an ordinance that would make sense and that would be enforceable.

Liz Wynn, member of the planning commission said that the council should make sign ordinance districts. She pointed out that there is a huge difference between six lanes of traffic going 50 miles per hour down Mooney and strolling down town. There signage needs are going to be completely different.

To get to this stage of a final sign ordinance has been years in the making. After accepting the fact that they could not write it themselves, the city hired a consultant. The consultant worked with the staff and business to get an outline of an ordinance. Then the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) conducted interviews with business owners and stakeholders and wrote a draft ordinance. The City Planning Commission held two public hearings then recommended the ordinance to the city council. Every step of the way there was dissent and the staff, TAC, Planning Commission, or business community never came to a consensus.

City Planner Josh McDonnell has been on the front lines of this battle. Through the years he has taken hits from a frustrated city council that could not understand why they couldn't write something as simple as a sign ordinance, or why it was taking so long.

McDonnell said that the only constant in writing a sign ordinance was dissent and that's how it goes throughout the state. Because there exists no federal or state regulations each city is free to write their own rules, and what is reasonable or attractive to one person is an eye soar to another. The other huge obstacle in writing a sign ordinance is taking in to consideration how that ordinance will be enforced.

In the end, Zurek explained that signs existed to get people inside of a store or business. She reminded that Visalia businesses are not just competing locally, but nationally and internationally as people can just go shopping on their phones.

"We need to keep the local tax dollars here," she said.

The city council voted to send the draft ordinance back to TAC for more research. They will take the matter up again at their regular meeting on July 20th.

CEMEX, Lemon Cove Residents Reach Settlement Agreement

Catherine Doe

On May 13, Michael Spata, director of the Resource Management Agency (RMA), stood in front of the Tulare County Planning Commission and announced that Cemex and the Lemon Cove residents whose wells had gone dry had settled.

The agreement is confidential but included compensation from Cemex to the residents for their expenses incurred when their wells went dry for a year due to Cemex' mining activities.

Spata also announced that RMA and Cemex had agreed to a revision of their mining permit on the Stillwell mine. The document had three revisions to Cemex' permit, and three recommendations directed towards the RMA.

The first and most important revision to the mining permit reinforced the requirement that the V ditch needs to stay full at all times. It states, "In compliance with Condition No. 55 so long as there is available water in the mine, the 'V' ditch shall contain a sufficient amount of water at all times in order to establish a groundwater mound to assist in maintaining water levels in neighboring wells during mining operation, under an Interim Management Plan, abandonment or during reclamation of the site, at times prior to completion of the Reclamation Plan 'created lakes.'"

The two other revisions state that monitoring by Tulare County staff will be paid for by Cemex and that any future peer review reports, such as the one completed by Tully and Young, also be paid for by Cemex. Monitoring of water levels in the wells will be done every month.

Julie Bigham, who lives close to the Lemon Cove facility, was the only person to speak during public comment. She had concerns about the phrase, "available water in the mine."

She felt that "available water" was not quantifiable, asking, "How is the available water in the mine measured? And who is measuring it? And who makes the decision as to whether the recharge trench is to be filled or not? Cemex? RMA?" She also pointed out that Cemex can't mine unless the pit is dry.

Spata responded that "just because Cemex says there is no water in the lake to fill the V trench does not make it so." Bingham felt that RMA would be powerless in a court of law the way the revision is worded.

The three recommendations, also up for the planning commission's approval, require that RMA do a better job at monitoring Cemex' compliance to their permit, especially when it comes to keeping water in the V trench.

In addition, RMA has committed to actively supervising the reclamation process when the time comes. Spata said that with the recommendations and the revised permit, RMA can act more effectively if problems emerge again.

The three recommendations proposed by RMA were a direct result of letters and testimonies during the public hearings. Ray Carlson, lawyer for the residents, commented after one of the hearings, "the problem is that the planning commission puts together all these conditions for the use permit, then just puts it on a shelf and forgets about them. No one is enforcing them."

According to the conditional use permit for the Stillwell mine, Cemex was supposed to be providing data every month to the RMA on water levels in the wells.

If Cemex had complied with its permit, and the RMA had enforced the conditions, the resident's wells would have never gone dry.

The planning commission approved the revised permit and recommendations unanimously.

The revisions bring up the same issues debated when the Morton family, the Kaweah Delta Conservation District, and the Kaweah and St. Johns River Association appealed Stillwell's mining permit in the first place.

During the appeals process, in 2002, several very intelligent water experts warned that the mine would affect the neighbors' wells. The planning commission and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors denied the appeal anyway.

Fast forward 13 years and one will find four homes that have lost all value because of the gravel mine. When the V ditch is full their wells have water. But if Cemex leaves town, goes bankrupt or the reclamation blocks the aquifer--which is very likely--those wells will go dry forever.

The settlement agreement between the residents and Cemex is confidential, and for good reason: Cemex didn't even want to reimburse the residents for expenses incurred during the year that they had no water, let alone for the loss of their property's value.

The Dispute Has Been Resolved

Spata declared the case closed, but like all mines in Tulare County's aquifer we have just turned the page on one more chapter.

The whole problem could have started in September of 2013, when Cemex stopped filling the recharge trench. Or perhaps the problem started with the Tulare County Board of Supervisors approving the mine in 2002.

But probably, the problem really started in the 1960's, when John Dofflemyer engaged in a 13-year fight with the county over Artesia, a gravel mining company along Dry Creek that ended up going broke and leaving town.

The Artesia mine was continually out of compliance and the county refused to do anything about it. Among the many infractions were: Mining too close to his property, dumping water from the gravel mine back into Dry Creek, and the mine lowering the water level in Dofflemyer's wells.

What happened to the wells going down or completely dry in February next to the Stillwell mine east of Lemon Cove, is the same thing that has happened for the last 50 years in the Kaweah River basin.

Anytime you disturb the underground aquifer it is going to adversely affect neighboring wells.

In the 1960's it was the Artesia Mine and Kaweah River Rock.

In the 1970's it was the Lemon Cove Project.

In the 1980's and 1990's it was an addition to the Lemon Cove Project, and now it's the Stillwell Project.

Briefly...

MATHIS HEADS TO WASHINGTON FOR AID IN NEW WELL DRILLING

Assemblyman Devon Mathis (R-Visalia) left Sacramento on a mission to seek Congressional help in drilling new water wells in Tulare County. Assemblyman Mathis has been working with the California National Guard during the past several weeks to identify Tulare County, and in particular East Porterville, as a candidate for assistance under the Innovative Readiness Training program (IRT) which is part of the federal Civil-Military Program. This program is designed to improve military readiness while also providing a public good throughout America. This approach to solving an immediate need for drinking water has never been attempted in California.

"Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures," stated Mathis. "I saw firsthand during my time in the military the capabilities of the men and women in our armed services to help people. The IRT program is designed to provide needed training for our troops while helping out American citizens. While the program has been used in California, it has never been used to drill wells. I can't think of a better time than now to start."

Mathis has been working with the California National Guard, who support the idea of using the IRT program to bring one of 30 well-drilling unit into Tulare County to begin searching for water sources. The Guard has qualified this mission as one that fits within the parameters of the program. The difficulty is the two-year waiting period.

"Two years is just not going to cut it. I understand there is a process, but we are in a State of Emergency and sometimes the process needs to be put aside to help people," said Mathis. "I am meeting with key members of Congress to get their help in expediting our request and get the unit rolling to the County by the end of summer," Mathis said.

While in Washington, Mathis will be meeting with Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Congressman David Valadeo, Congressman Paul Cook, Congressman Doug LaMalfa and Congressman Jeff Denham. His office is waiting to hear back on a meeting with Congressman Devin Nunes.

Regardless of this trip being for legislative duties, Mathis is forfeiting his per diem and none of the expenses will be paid for by state funds.

— Amanda Morello

TULARE COUNTY SUPERVISORS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON D.C.

Tulare County Supervisor Pete Vander Poel and Steve Worthley met with lawmakers in Washington D. C. May 12th and 13th. According to the Visalia Times Delta their goal was to discuss paying overtime to deputies who clear marijuana on Federal land. They also discussed increasing the amount of water allowed in Success Lake. For years the water level was reduced in Success Lake because the Army Corps of Engineers feared the dam may fail. After a year or so of tests the dam was declared safe in April of 2014. Officials with the Army Corps are now looking at the lake's future which could include bringing in a new marina and expanding its capacity, possibly to as much as 110,000 acre feet.

Other topics broached by the supervisors were federal dollars to create more water storage and more funding for forest management projects to head off the threat of wildfires in Sequoia and Kings National Forest. According to the Forest Service a total of 12.5 million trees have died because of the drought in our forests. Supervisors want more money to be put into forest management to reduce the fire risk.

The supervisors met with Representatives Kevin McCarthy, David Valadao and the legislative assistants for Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. Three supervisors had originally planned to go the week of April 20th but had to cancel due to illness.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY INVESTIGATOR HONORED BY US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

On May 18, 2015, Tulare County District Attorney Investigator Dwayne Johnson was presented with the 2014 United States Attorney's Office, Eastern District - Fresno Division "Outstanding Law Enforcement Investigator Award" for his work with the San Joaquin Valley Mortgage Fraud Task Force. The award was presented by U.S. Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner. In May 2013, Investigator Johnson was the lead investigator in a fraudulent foreclosure rescue business case. On the basis of a single complaint, Johnson commenced a long-term investigation that ultimately uncovered a fraud scheme that victimized dozens of homeowners in numerous counties, many of whom eventually lost their houses in foreclosure. Johnson prepared and undertook the execution of several search warrants, reviewed thousands of pages of documents, conducted dozens of witness interviews and planned and executed various undercover operations. Juan Ramon Curiel and Santiago Palacios-Hernandez pleaded guilty in December 2014 and admitted that they had caused more than $2.5 million in losses to more than 50 vulnerable homeowners and financial institutions.

RUIZ 4 KIDS AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO 281 STUDENTS

Ruiz 4 Kids has announced the recipients of their 2015 Ruiz 4 Kids Scholarship Awards. All scholarship dollars are raised via the Louis F. Ruiz Golf Invitational. This year, Ruiz 4 Kids has awarded $285,500 to 281 students. Since its inception, Ruiz 4 Kids has awarded over $2M in scholarships.

"The choice to further ones education is not only a life decision, but a financial decision as well," said Ron Woods, Ruiz 4 Kids President. "Whether a student chooses to pursue a trade school or four-year college education, our scholarships will help ease the financial burden and turn a student's dream of higher education into a reality."

Graduates from El Diamante, Farmersville, Golden West, Mission Oak, Mt. Whitney, Redwood, Tulare Union, Tulare Western and Woodlake High School who were awarded scholarships are:

El Diamante High School: Emily Benedetta, Victoria Fortin, Brenna Hatcher, Madison Thompson

Farmersville High School: Patricia Barrios, Lizett Perez, Sarai Ramos Gonzalez, Dulce Venancio

Golden West High School: Bryan Contreras– Mora, Emily Hou, Sara Jakubowski, Jaquelin Martin, Luisa Mendoza, Angela Perez, Annie Rubio, Mariela Velasco

Mission Oak High School: Justin Aceves, Eion Harrow, Ana Sandoval, Koby Tripp

Mt. Whitney High School: Diego Aceves, Jessica Albarran, Krysta Bernasconi, Jasmine Manzo-Anguiano, Scott Mendonca, Danielle Warmerdam, Benjamin Warmerdam, Rayme Zamarripa

Redwood High School: Nicholas Chavez, Amy Chow, Rickie Garcia, Edgar Godinez, Alaura Mcguire, Casey Mitchell, Evan Morritse, Elijah Nevarez, Caitlin Owens, Jorge Pineda-Zarco, Chase Proctor, Dalia Ramos, Cassandra Topete, Emily Zhou

Tulare Union High: Monique Beltrain, Alexander Galvan, Samantha Pena, Jose Santana, Taylor Slover

Tulare Western: Anyssa Dominguez, Meghan Flora, Sarah Molina, Kassie Reynolds

Woodlake High School: Gabrielle Diaz, Abbie Friel, James Hernandez, Cyrena Lopez, Denise Renteria, Ramon Reyes-Reyes

Ruiz 4 Kids, a non-profit organization formed in conjunction with Ruiz Foods, was founded in 1990 when Ruiz Team members approached Fred Ruiz asking him to help them explore ways to assist families with children in need. Since then, Ruiz 4 Kids has organized two annual fundraising events – a golf invitational to raise monies for scholarships and a fiesta event to raise monies for area non-profits who are in need to grow their children-focused programs.

CHAMBER'S 62ND ANNUAL AWARDS CELEBRATION TO HONOR OUTSTANDING BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY

Each year the Visalia Chamber of Commerce honors those businesses and individuals who consistently go above and beyond to support our community. This year is no exception as dozens of nominations have been submitted for the 2015 Man and Woman of the Year as well as Small, Medium, Large, Non-profit and Emerging Leaders Award.

Winners will be announced at the 62nd Annual Awards Celebration presented by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, June 18 at the Visalia Convention Center. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails begin at 6pm, followed by a formal dinner at 6pm and the program at 7:30pm.

"The Chamber is excited to once again be able to identify and recognize the businesses and individuals who are going above and beyond to make Visalia strong," said President/CEO Gail Zurek. "Selecting one honoree in each category is a big challenge for the selection committee, but the quality that we have to chose from is a real testament to the community."

Last year the Annual Award Celebration sold out and record numbers of attendees are expected again this year. Tickets for the Annual Awards Celebration are $70 each or a table of 8 for $520. They can be purchased at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce located at 220 N. Santa Fe Street or online at www.visaliachamber.org. New sponsorship opportunities are now available, call the Chamber office for more information at (559)734-5876.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce serves as the "voice of business" and provides strategic leadership and engagement in building the future of business and the community through information, services, and advocacy to the employers of our community.

This year's annual award celebration nominees include:

Small Business of the Year
Bourdette & Partners
Companion Animal Medical Center
Max's Cookie Company
Stor It Self Storage
The Lockwood Agency

Medium Business of the Year
Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group
Seals/Biehle General Contractors
Suncrest Bank
Visalia Ceramic Tile

Large Business of the Year
Bank of the Sierra
Educational Employees Credit Union
Jo-Ann Stores West Coast Distribution Center
KRC Safety
Pacific Southwest Container

Non-Profit of the Year
Family Services of Tulare County
Habitat for Humanity of Tulare County
Hands in the Community
Pro Youth Heart
Sequoia Natural History Association

Emerging Leader
Erin Garner-Ford,
ACT for Women & Girls
Sarah Heaney, M.D. Inc
LJ Lara, Tazzaria
Steve McCartha,
True Legacy Consulting
Kent Moore, DMI Agency
Dante Rosh,
Family Healthcare Network
Matt Seals,
Seals/Biehle General Contractors
Erin Olm-Shipman,
Fox Theatre & Arts Consortium
Chelsea Stemkoski,
Visalia Rescue Mission
Ryan Stillwater,
Visalia Rescue Mission
Brett Taylor, Realty Stars
JoeAnna Todd, Buckman-Mitchell

Man of the Year
Armondo Apodaca,
Tulare King Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Lindsay Mann,
Kaweah Delta Healthcare District
Donn Ritter,
San Joaquin Valley College
Sam Sciacca, Century21 Jordan Link

Woman of the Year
Dr. Nanette Kuswa,
Companion Animal Medical Center
Mary Bryant,
The Real Mooney Grove Project
Barbara Mayeda,
Kaweah Delta Private Home Care
Cheryl Christman,
ImagineU Children's Museum
Susan Mathews,
Susan Mathews Properties
Darlene Mayfield,
Saint Anthony's Retreat/Santa Teresita Youth Conf. Ctr.

Mooney Grove

Continued from p. 1

the *Valley Voice*. He said, he would never read the Voice for accurate information. Since he is the main person, I suggested he read it. Now it's a he said, she said."

2008 -The Beginning Of the End

In 2008, a local farmer, John Rogers, presented the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) with a letter and testified at the public hearing against building the Tulare County History of Farm Labor and Agriculture Museum. The county was hoping to receive a million dollar grant to help build the new museum. But Rogers felt the county was ram-rodding the grant through the system. Even then, Mooney Grove was suffering from years of deferred maintenance and Rogers feared that spending money on the farm and labor museum would make the situation worse. His words were prophetic.

During public workshops to inform county residents about the museum, the RMA said that the county was poised to receive a huge state grant and they did not want to lose it. The grant was to provide $1.7 million toward building the new museum, and the county would have to spend $1.3 million.

Rogers has since been told those numbers are not correct, but after repeated requests he has not been provided with the updated numbers. It is possible that the county actually had to pay more than $1.3 million in matching funds. On top of the cost of building the museum, Tulare County Park and Recreation money has to pay for staffing, displays and general maintenance of the museum instead of maintaining the park.

The children's drinking fountain at the Mooney Grove Park playground. Photo by Catherine Doe

It's Not the Drought

Rogers drives through the park a couple times a week but says that the situation just makes his blood boil. He said everything concerning the condition the park is so outrageous and none of it makes sense. On one of his drives he ran into Neil Pilegard, head of the Tulare County Parks and Recreation. Rogers suggested to Pilegard that he give the grounds a good soaking before the coming summer heat. Pilegard told him that the county has let three of its wells go dry and that only one well is left. Rogers told him that one well is not sufficient to water the park and that many of the redwoods would die. Maybe not the older ones, but the younger redwoods would not survive the summer.

Mooney Grove is a county-run park within the Visalia city limits, so it has to comply with Visalia's Stage 4 water restrictions. But those water restrictions suggest parks reduce their water use by 20 percent. According to the *Visalia Times-Delta*, during Supervisor Phil Cox's state-of-the-county address in January of 2014, he said, "Tulare County Parks Manager Neil Pilegard had already taken it upon himself to initiate ways to cut down water use in county parks. In February and March, county parks had about a 90 percent reduction of water use."

The Mooney Grove park pond as of May 2015. Photo by Catherine Doe

Even though the Governor of California declared a drought emergency last year, Visalia continues to issue approximately 40 pool permits a month, Tulare County has approved 2,700 new well drilling permits and Exeter farmers have recently put barren land into agriculture production by planting new row crops and pistachios. Without any problem, Rogers irrigates his groves that are located close to the park. What frustrates Rogers about the slow death of Mooney Grove is that he knows that the park sits above one of the strongest aquifers in Tulare County.

Systematic Destruction of the Park

Within the park, the grass is brown, young trees are dying, the bathrooms are disgusting, the benches, fountains, picnic arbors and bridges are disintegrating, and the pond is a litter-strewn, stagnant green soup. There is a hypothetical promenade around the pond where part of the sidewalk is underwater and the rest is covered in goose poop.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors places the blame on money, the drought and geese. When compared to Visalia's Plaza Park and Tulare's Del Lago Lake, they have clean lakes where several fishing tournaments take place every year. Both parks are experiencing the same financial restraints, drought and problems with geese. The respective managers said that they keep their ponds clean of algae and the staff is instructed to immediately remove any dead animals from the water. The staff is also instructed to clean up the goose poop every day.

Neither would give their opinion of Mooney Grove, but one park manager stated, "Neil Pilegard understands water issues, the problem is not the drought."

Dying younger trees at Mooney Grove Park. Photo by Catherine Doe

The walkway around Mooney Grove Park is littered with goose poop. Photo by Catherine Doe

Viewpoint

The Vietnam War: After 40 Years

Lawrence S. Wittner

Today, 40 years after the American war in Vietnam ended in ignominious defeat, the traces of that terrible conflict are disappearing.

Traveling through Vietnam during the latter half of April 2015 with a group of erstwhile antiwar activists, I was struck by the transformation of what was once an impoverished, war-devastated peasant society into a modern nation. Its cities and towns are bustling with life and energy. Vast numbers of motorbikes surge through their streets, including 4.2 million in Hanoi and 7 million in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). A thriving commercial culture has emerged, based not only on many small shops, but on an influx of giant Western, Japanese, and other corporations. Although Vietnam is officially a Communist nation, about 40 percent of the economy is capitalist, and the government is making great efforts to encourage private foreign investment. Indeed, over the past decade, Vietnam has enjoyed one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. Not only have manufacturing and tourism expanded dramatically, but Vietnam has become an agricultural powerhouse. Today it is the world's second largest exporter of rice, and one of the world's leading exporters of coffee, pepper, rubber, and other agricultural commodities. Another factor distancing the country from what the Vietnamese call "the American War" is the rapid increase in Vietnam's population. Only 41 million in 1975, it now tops 90 million, with most of it under the age of 30 -- too young to have any direct experience with the conflict.

Vietnam has also made a remarkable recovery in world affairs. It now has diplomatic relations with 189 countries, and enjoys good relations with all the major nations.

Nevertheless, the people of Vietnam paid a very heavy price for their independence from foreign domination. Some three million of them died in the American War, and another 300,000 are still classified as MIAs. In addition, many, many Vietnamese were wounded or crippled in the conflict. Perhaps the most striking long-term damage resulted from the U.S. military's use of Agent Orange (dioxin) as a defoliant. Vietnamese officials estimate that, today, some four million of their people suffer the terrible effects of this chemical, which not only destroys the bodies of those exposed to it, but has led to horrible birth defects and developmental disabilities into the second and third generations. Much of Vietnam's land remains contaminated by Agent Orange, as well as by unexploded ordnance (UXO). Indeed, since the end of the American war in 1975, the landmines, shells, and bombs that continue to litter the nation's soil have wounded or killed over 105,000 Vietnamese -- many of them children.

During the immediate postwar years, Vietnam's ruin was exacerbated by additional factors. These included a U.S. government embargo on trade with Vietnam, U.S. government efforts to isolate Vietnam diplomatically, and a 1979 Chinese military invasion of Vietnam employing 600,000 troops. Although the Vietnamese managed to expel the Chinese -- just as they had previously routed the French and the Americans -- China continued border skirmishes with Vietnam until 1988. In addition, during the first postwar decade, the ruling Vietnamese Communist Party pursued a hardline, repressive policy that undermined what was left of the economy and alienated much of the population. Misery and starvation were widespread.

Nevertheless, starting in the mid-1980s, the country made a remarkable comeback. This recovery was facilitated by Communist Party reformers who loosened the reins of power, encouraged foreign investment, and worked at developing a friendlier relationship with other nations, especially the United States. In 1995, the U.S. and Vietnamese governments resumed diplomatic relations. Although these changes did not provide a panacea for the nation's ills -- for example, the U.S. State Department informed the new U.S. ambassador that he must never mention Agent Orange -- Vietnam's circumstances, and particularly its relationship with the United States, gradually improved. U.S.-Vietnamese trade expanded substantially, reaching $35 billion in 2014. Thousands of Vietnamese students participated in educational exchanges. In recent years, the U.S. government even began funding programs to help clean up Agent Orange contamination and UXO.

Although, in part, this U.S.-Vietnamese détente resulted from the growing flexibility of officials in both nations, recently it has also reflected the apprehension of both governments about the increasingly assertive posture of China in Asian affairs. Worried about China's unilateral occupation of uninhabited islands in the South China Sea during 2014, both governments began to resist it -- the United States through its "Pacific pivot" and Vietnam through an ever closer relationship with the United States to "balance" China. Although both nations officially support the settlement of the conflict over the disputed islands through diplomacy centered on the 10 countries that comprise the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), officials in Vietnam, increasingly nervous about China's ambitions, appear to welcome the growth of a more powerful U.S. military presence in the region. In the context of this emerging agreement on regional security, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, and U.S. President Barack Obama will be visiting Vietnam later this year.

This shift from warring enemies to cooperative partners over the past 40 years should lead to solemn reflection. In the Vietnam War, the U.S. government laid waste to a poor peasant nation in an effort to prevent the triumph of a Communist revolution that U.S. policymakers insisted would result in the conquest of the United States. And yet, when this counter-revolutionary effort collapsed, the predicted Red tide did not sweep over the shores of California. Instead, an independent nation emerged that could -- and did -- work amicably with the U.S. government. This development highlights the unnecessary nature -- indeed, the tragedy -- of America's vastly destructive war in Vietnam. It also underscores the deeper folly of relying on war to cope with international issues.

Time for Americans to Accept Responsibility

Jared Keyel

The United States must accept responsibility for the damage its military actions have caused and recognize there are alternatives for the future.

In the nearly decade and a half since the September 11th, 2001 attacks, the United States has invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, carried out bombing campaigns throughout the Middle East, and launched special operations strikes throughout the world.

These policies are non-partisan. Many military actions begun under George W. Bush have continued and intensified under Barack Obama. The CIA-led drone wars in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen are a key component of Mr. Obama's administration and the use of U.S. Special Forces has exploded in recent years, deploying to 134 countries in 2013.

The consequences of these actions are immense. In the words of 13-year-old Yemeni, Mohammed Tuaiman, U.S. drone strikes have "turned our area into hell and continuous horror, day and night, we even dream of them in our sleep." Mohammed, like his father and brother, was later killed by an American drone. Fourteen-year-old Zubair Ur Rehman, whose grandmother was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan, told five members of Congress in 2103, "I no longer love blue skies. In fact, I like gray skies; the drones cannot fly when the skies are gray."

Physicians for Social Responsibility, the American affiliate of Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, recently released a report that estimates at least 1.3 million people have died as a result of the U.S. invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the violent spillover into Pakistan. U.S. policies have not brought stability to countries such as Afghanistan or Yemen and as the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has shown, U.S. military actions have fanned the flames of terrorism, not extinguished them.

There is no doubt that many Americans believe our military interventions are undertaken to help others around the world. Unfortunately, the reality is far different. From Afghanistan to Libya, our military interventions have left broken lives and nations in ruins. It may be surprising to some Americans, but a 2013 Gallup poll of 65 countries saw the United States at the top of the list of greatest threats to world peace.

We as Americans need to take that perception seriously and accept responsibility for the enormous human suffering our wars and interventions have caused.

Most Americans have a genuine desire to help and not hurt others around the world. We can work to alleviate the injury we have already caused by providing more support for emergency humanitarian aid and refugee protection and resettlement, more funding to allow the societies we have torn apart to rebuild themselves, and by engaged, multilateral, diplomacy to try to end ongoing violence.

We need to push our government, no matter which party is currently in power, to live up to our obligations under international law and end the pervasive use of military force. We have relied on military means too widely and too belligerently and

Local Toastmasters Clubs Honor Members

Kermit Wullschleger

Fear of public speaking is such a common fear that people from all walks of life share. Toastmasters is a speech club that helps you improve public speaking and communication skills.

Most people, after spending six months in Toastmasters, find themselves more comfortable with speaking in front of a group of people. Toastmasters offers a friendly environment where one can practice a speech in front of a friendly audience who are there to help, support, encourage every step of the way.

Being a member of Toastmasters is more than becoming a better public speaker. It is about networking, communication skills, becoming a leader, and meeting new friends. It is very educational as you learn so much about life, coping mechanisms, the environment, leadership skills, how to trim a tree, computer skills and more.

Monica Story and Bob Chiurazzi have been the driving force behind Toastmasters' growth in Tulare County. Story is being talked about in Toastmasters circles up and down the Central Valley. She currently serves as treasurer for Visalia Toastmasters, as well as director of District G, which covers all the Toastmasters clubs in Tulare and Kings County. On July 1, Story will become director of Area G-4, which ranges from Porterville to Fresno.

In the past year and a half, she has been instrumental in starting new Toastmasters clubs in Exeter and Hanford. She also helps and serves with the Downtown Visalia Toastmasters club that meets on Fridays from 12:15-1:15pm.

Chiurazzi has been a Toastmaster for the last 25 years. He started out at the Orange Belt Club in Lindsay. He is now a past president of Visalia Toastmasters Club.

"I admire Monica Story as much as anyone else in Toastmasters International. She takes on more roles and fixes more problems than any three 'regular' people. She is generous and kind, always making herself available to those in need. I once told her that I already have two sisters, but if I had a third, I would want it to be her," said Paul Laufer, president of Visalia Toastmasters.

"Bob Chiurazzi has become one of my best friends and mentors in the short 21 months that I have known him. I have tried to pattern my presidency of Visalia Toastmasters after the example he set as president when I first joined. He is a great leader and a man of distinguished character. I admire him deeply. Often when I'm unsure of something I ask myself 'what would Bob do,'" Laufer said.

The meeting schedules for Tulare/Kings Toastmaster clubs include:

- Visalia Toastmasters meets on Tuesdays from 6-7:30pm, at Brandman University, 649 S. County Center Drive, Visalia.
- Downtown Toastmasters meets on Fridays from 12:15-1:15pm, at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, 220 N Santa Fe St, Visalia.

Everyone is welcome to any of the above Toastmasters clubs. It enhances one's speaking skills as well as their communication skills. It is also a great opportunity to network with other professionals in the area. Attendance is free for guests. Membership is nominal.

Columns & Letters

"I no longer take seriously ANYTHING the Tulare County Board of Supervisors have to say,do,vote on, etc I sent emails to 4 out 5 asking what THEY had to say to convince voters their County Representative had MOONEY GROVE as a high priority and their voters wishes to be met ONLY 1 replied and I DO believe the most sincere However after reviewing the ADOPED COUNTY BUDGET for 2014/15 I am convinced NONE of them have a clue how much $$$ is wasted,who is fudging from a little to alot, and if ANYONE else is even watching at ALL And why approve 20 year plan with NO budget,estimates etc when THEY all pocket @ $100k and have a $1BILLION dollar fiscal year budget and the park is still a MESS !!! Mind Boggeling"

— ***mary bryant,** on **Tulare County BoS Responds to Grand Jury Report***

"Last month, March 20th, in response to the juvenile and utterly ridiculous antics of Mr. Macareno and his followers in trashing the well attended and impressive Roosevelt Gala put on by the group formerly known as the Visalia Democratic Club (a name removed by Mr. Macareno's petty and vindictive Central Committee) I wrote a response to the article describing the war being waged by Mr. Macareno against all other real Democrats who refuse to fall in line with his desire to be the undisputed Monarch of all Tulare County Democrats.
I now understand Mr. Macareno is spouting off about my comments. So in case anyone missed what I had to say, I re-post it again below and I still stand by every word. Thank you."

— ***Joe Altschule,** on **State Party Finds Local Democrats Unfairly Sanctioned***

"The Commission on Judicial Performance is perceived by the public as a total joke, completely ineffective at its designated function of oversight and accountability of California judges. The CJP is a waste of taxpayer money and should be eliminated. A new agency that actually protects court consumers should replace it. As it is now, it only protects judges and is indistinguishable from the California Judges Association, the judges union. Excellent article."

— ***Emma Johnson,** on **Judge Valeriano Saucedo's Last Hearing***

"Judges are not judging. They're attacking people, threatening their lives in front of their children like that old cow referee Sobel did in Los Angeles. Yes, the clowns at the Commission on Judicial performance are just that, old ugly clowns. We need to get rid of them, one way or another."

— ***E Freebird,** on **Judge Valeriano Saucedo's Last Hearing***

"Shuklian, I can't wait to see someone run against you in the new districts."

— ***Quando,** on **Visalia City Council Delays Splitting into Voting Districts***

"One correction re: unlicensed drivers – we don't know if anyone has anymore insurance. Cars are required to be insured, not drivers. You are required to insure your car. There is no driver insurance. That's why they call it Auto Insurance."

— ***Jack Quinn,** on **Political Fix (7 May, 2015)***

"Flash back from Last Year!"

— ***Lauri Segrue-Polly,** on **Visalia's Fourth of July Fireworks Show Cancelled***

"With the current drought situation, ALL fireworks should be banned. Why waste precious water to fight house or grass fires?"

— ***MrMaples Coyne,** on **Visalia's Fourth of July Fireworks Show Cancelled***

"My lawn is yellow then most lawns in my neighborhood. I understand we had 1 watering day per week in April but what if you can't water because your not around so then you water a different day and get fined.Obviously my yellow grass shows I'm not watering and I'm not a water waster. Although it looks like I am because I couldn't water that exact day. There should be a way to monitor how much water is being used on lawns overall. Yet the house next door has green,green grass and waters whenever with no fines."

— ***Jayne,** on **Visalia City Council Votes on Extending Stage 4 Restrictions***

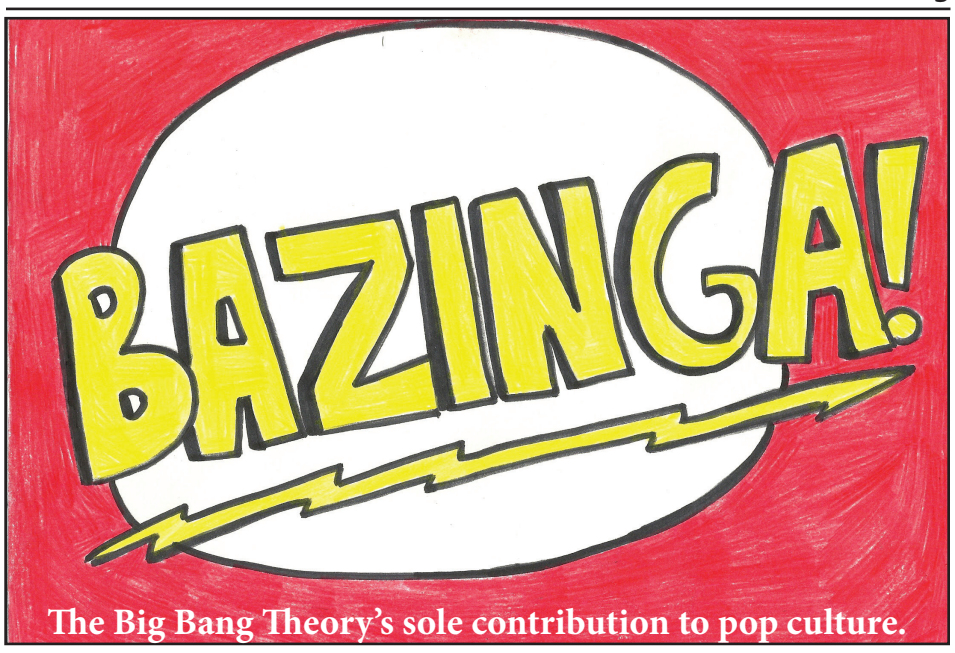
The following comment to the *Times-Delta* was shared with us by the author

"Dear Mr. Wevurski: I see that you as the Times-Delta's "executive managing editor" have now moved from nearby Salinas to LA! So much for our "community" newspaper -- which had always had a *resident* managing editor before your merger took over. Here's how you can serve your readers better: Move back here, or hire a local counterpart of yourself. Get some of the good (and known) local senior staff back here. Hire a copy editor/proofreader. Then get real. Even the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles Times don't charge a fee to read their online editions. Put up a fight with the higher-ups if you must, but stop excluding the vast majority of our population-- economically the poorest in the state-- by charging $8 a month for access to your paper, and only a portion of it at that. Then you might get some of the regulars back; at this time you've lost them, and we've stopped posting your articles on our Facebook pages because we've lost contact with them as well."

— ***Renee Lapin,** to the **Visalia Times-Delta***

Apéritif

Mercedes Oldenbourg



The Big Bang Theory's sole contribution to pop culture.

Veteran's Corner

Disability Compensation for Conditions Related to Military Sexual Trauma

Joe Wright

Some Veterans may have experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military. These kinds of experiences can affect Veterans' mental and physical health, even many years later. Veterans can apply for disability compensation for any current difficulties that are related to their service, including difficulties related to MST. Disabilities determined by VA to be related to your military service can lead to monthly non-taxable compensation, enrollment in the VA health care system, and other important benefits.

Veterans are not granted compensation for the traumatic event itself, but can be granted disability compensation for conditions that result from MST. Exposure to any trauma can potentially result in PTSD or another mental health disorder. PTSD is the most common mental health diagnosis related to experiencing MST.

Evidence required can be forms used in reporting incidents of sexual assault or harassment, as well as investigative reports during military service. However, VA knows that events involving sexual trauma are not always officially reported. Therefore, for PTSD claims related to MST, the VA has relaxed the evidentiary requirements and looks for "markers" (i.e., signs, events, or circumstances) that provide some indication that the traumatic event happened. Because military service records may lack corroborating evidence that a stressful event occurred, VA regulations make clear that evidence from non-military sources may be used to corroborate the Veteran's account of the MST. Further, when direct evidence of an MST is not available, VA may request a medical opinion to consider a Veteran's account and any "markers" to corroborate the occurrence of the MST event as related to current PTSD symptoms.

VA provides free health care for physical and mental health conditions related to experiences of MST. No documentation of the MST experiences or disability compensation rating is required. Some Veterans may be able to receive this free MST-related health care even if they are not eligible for other VA care.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

THE VALLEY VOICE IS YOUR NEWSPAPER

Published by The Valley Voice, LLC.

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Valley Voice

A Weekend Away

National Parks Easily Accessible to South Valley Residents

Nancy Vigran

Those who live in the South Valley are lucky enough to have some of the nation's most treasured national parks right in their own backyard. Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Yosemite are all close enough for a day trip, but desirable enough for much longer visits.

All three of these parks have major anniversaries this year. Both Sequoia and Yosemite were deemed national parks 125 years ago, making them the third and fourth parks admitted to the system. Kings Canyon was named as such 75 years ago. Each has their own independent attractions while being part of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

One of the easiest ways to learn about each park and its history is through the variety of ranger talks and walks provided throughout the summer at each location.

While these talks and walks are not necessarily scheduled with exact dates and times through the entire season, there are sure to be plenty to interest everyone, said Dana Dierkes, public affairs specialist for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Talk topics include the history of the park, geology, wildlife, trees and flowers, and the native people. Talks may take place at visitor centers, lodges, campfires and various other places around a park.

Ranger walks generally occur along easy trail walks through meadows, around trees and near waterfalls. Discussion here may include the surrounding wildlife, bird life, trees, geology and more.

All ranger talks and walks are free to park visitors. There is no prior registration or sign-up. Talks may last from 30 minutes to an hour. Walks, in general, may last from one to one-and-a-half hours. Visitors are asked to dress accordingly for any event.

Park visitors may receive a current newsletter when entering a park. If not, one should be available at any visitor center and at lodging facilities. Talks and walks for the current timeline should appear in this information.

While the majority of talks and walks are of interest to most age groups,

PARKS continued on **IV »**

Views of Yosemite from the Glacier Point trail. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

Nature's Air Conditioned Underground Caverns

Staff Reports

As the weather heats up outside, the local caverns of Sequoia and Kings Canyon Parks open up for the summer.

Some believe the vast amount of caves within the two parks would have been worthy of National Park status and protection by themselves. More than 80 caves were documented within the two parks during the 1970's, according to the National Park Service. But it wasn't until the find of the Hurricane Crawl Cave in 1986 that a more proactive cave management program began in the parks.

There are some 200 discovered caves ranging in elevation from 1,500 to 10,000 feet located along this area of the Sierra, according to the National Park Service. Some of these caves may be found at the South Fork of the Kaweah River, Mineral King, Paradise Ridge, Yucca Creek and Redwood Canyon.

Subterranean streams continue to polish marble and create the stalactites and stalagmites of the cave known as Crystal Cave in Sequoia National Park, a popular visitor's destination since the early 1940's. Crystal Cave is open to the public during summer months through guided tours only.

Entrance to the cave is located in

CAVERNS continued on **II »**

Winetasting Makes for a Great Get-Away Throughout California

Staff Reports

While there has long been an interest in winetasting, in the past couple decades the business has been booming with wine grape vineyards, wineries, winetasting locales, winery tours and lodging popping up in a variety of areas around California.

Many of these are within a comfortable driving distance of Tulare and Kings Counties including Lodi, the Gold Country, Paso Robles and, of course, the Napa Valley, as well as a few local wineries. Whether you want a one-day outing, a weekend away with the girls, or a romantic get-away with your significant other, there is a lot around to see and taste.

The Gold Country

The alluvial fans and piedmonts of the Sierra Foothills have proven a great growing location for vineyards with some 30 to 40 wineries located between Mariposa and Placerville, along California's historic Highway 49. An abundance of these are located in Placerville, Sutter Creek and Plymouth.

This can make for a multi-purpose trip of winetasting while learning the history of California's Gold Rush and Gold Country. There are many quaint bed and breakfasts along this route, some deeply rooted with local history, others newer with the finest of amenities.

This is where Mark Twain's tales of The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County originated and the town of Angel's Camp hosts the Calaveras County Fair and Jumping Frog Jubilee each May. It is also an area known for ghost tales dating back to the California Gold Rush days of 1850's.

Paso Robles

Located in San Luis County and not far from the ocean, lies Paso Robles and that area's vineyards. Here there are numerous wineries and winetasting rooms surrounding the city. It's coastal and Mediterranean-type climate with long autumns, makes it a perfect grape-growing region. There is a mix of larger hotels, motels and bed and breakfast lodging here, or perhaps a stay on the coast is in order with a day trip to the wineries.

The Paso Robles location with its nearby beaches and lots of shopping, is a trending locale for the girls get-away. But that shouldn't stop couples' weekend, as there is a lot of romance in the air here, as well.

Lodi

Lodi boosts some 85-plus wineries in San Joaquin County along Highway 99, close to Stockton. As a part of the San Joaquin Valley, it is close enough for a day tour, but winetasting may just qualify for at least one night's stay in the area.

There are a variety of local museums including the World of Wonders Science Museum and the historical Hill House museum. Lodi is also known for its local artists and artist galleries and is home to the Micke Grove Zoo.

Napa and Sonoma Valleys

Napa and Sonoma may be a bit further, but are known world-wide for their wine and wineries. This long-term tourist destination has an abundance of lodging from the quaint bed-and-breakfast to 5-Star resorts with spas, salons and golf courses.

Napa offers a wide-variety of entertainment year-round for the whole family including the Napa Valley Opera House and the V Marketplace. There are a few culinary schools in the area and both Napa and Sonoma feature railroad history through the Sonoma Traintown Railroad and Napa Valley Wine Train.

Knowing where to go and what to do in any of California's wine regions is the key to a good visit. Visitor centers and chambers may offer advice, as can a hotel concierge, but there is another key option. The wine country now has private tour guides and winery specialists, who know every in and out of every facility in their area. They know the smaller, more intimate wineries and the larger, better known ones, and they can get you in for a tour, or a last-minute wine tasting.

The bonus of many of these tours is that you do not have to worry about drinking and driving. Most will pick you up at your hotel, take you either on a predetermined trip, or where you want to go and return you safe and sound to your temporary abode.

Whether you prefer red or white, or a bit of the bubbly, a Sunday brunch, or a mid-week mini-vacation, a day off or a week off, California's wine areas can show you a relaxing time.

Things To See and Do When Visiting the State Capital

Tony Maldonado

Sacramento, a short drive or flight away, isn't just for politicians. Dubbed "America's most diverse city," Sacramento is host to hundreds of years' worth of history, a vibrant arts community, and more. Below is a hand-picked list of recommendations for things to do and places to see:

California Automobile Museum, 2200 Front Street – www.calautomuseum.org

Open daily from 10 am to 6 pm; general admission $8, students $4, 5 and under free, 65+ and AAA members $1 off. Dads free on Father's Day, veterans free on Memorial/Veteran's Days.

Originally holding one of the largest collection of Fords in the world, the California Automobile Museum now constantly rotates its exhibits, featuring some cars from its own collection and many more from private collectors and all makes and models.

On Memorial Day, the museum will host a "Vettes for Vets/American Muscle Car Show" event, including a color guard presentation, hot dogs, and a raffle. The museum encourages you to dress in theme and will be featuring a '43 Army Jeep and the opportunity to get in the cockpit of a Bell UH-1 helicopter. Retired & active military admitted in the museum free; the car show is outdoors and free for all.

Through June 7, the museum will be presenting "Flash and Flair: The Atomic 50s and 60s," showing visitors "some of the extreme styling and colorful excess of post-war America through automobiles."

Crocker Art Museum, 216 O Street – www.crockerartmuseum.org

Tuesday-Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday 10am-9pm; adults $10, 65+/college students $8, 7-17 $5, 6 and under free.

The oldest public art museum west of the Mississippi River – and a California Historic Landmark – the Crocker Art Museum has six permanent collections: "African and Oceanic Art," "Asian Art," "European Art," "Works on Paper," "International Ceramics," and "Californian and American Art."

On May 30, the museum will hold a Highlight Tour, billed as an "introductory tour" of the museum and its works, at 11, 12, 1 and 2 PM.

California State Railroad Museum, 111 I Street – www.csrmf.org

Open daily from 10 am to 5 pm; adults $10, children ages 6-17 $5, 5 and under free.

The California State Railroad Museum holds over 225,000 square feet of railroad history and 21 restored locomotives/cars available for viewing -- and visitors are able to step inside and explore most of them.

In addition, every Saturday/Sunday through September 27, the museum will be offering hourly train rides pulled by a restored locomotive on the Sacramento Southern Railroad. First class and coach tickets are available.

California State Fair, 1600 Exposition Blvd – castatefair.org

July 10-16; prices and packages available online

This year's fair will include concerts featuring Morris Day and the Time, Air Supply, Martina McBride, Ashanti, War, and .38 Special.

Entries have already closed for most competitions, but are still open for Junior Livestock (June 5), Open Livestock (June 12), California Canning and Baking (June 19), and California Youth Canning and Baking (June 19). For rules on how to enter, visit the fair's website for more information.

California State Capitol Museum, 10th/L Streets – capitolmuseum.ca.gov

Weekdays 8am-5pm, Weekends 9am-5pm; admission free.

The state capitol offers great photography opportunities and a look at California's vast history. Visitors can tour historical offices, while a theater in the basement shows various films. Works of art – paintings, statues, and murals – and governors' portraits are on display throughout the capitol's west wing and East Annex. Tours are available hourly from 9am-4pm – for more information, call (916) 324-0333.

Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, 15th/Capitol Avenue

Located at the north-east corner of Capitol Park, the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial is engraved with the names of 5,657 Californian soldiers who died or were declared missing in action during the Vietnam War and veterans who later died due to physical/mental injuries incurred during time in the war. The Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 500, will be holding a 16th Annual Reading of the Names ceremony on Sunday, May 24, beginning at 12pm.

There are many more things to do while you're visiting the state capital, and while you're out, you'll certainly find more.

Caverns

Continued from p. I

the Giant Forest area of the park and contains some three miles of passage in its formations. The cave remains at a constant temperature of 48F degrees, so jackets are recommended. There is a half-mile hike to the cave entrance. Guided tours begin at the entrance to the ring the peak season, early reservations are recommended and all tours are through reservation only. Tickets must be purchased at the Foothills or Lodgepole Visitors Centers within the park.

A Christmas Tree formation at Boyden Cavern. Photo courtesy of Lisa Boulton, Sierra Nevada Recreation.

Boyden Cavern is located along the Kings Canyon Scenic Byway between Grants Grove and Cedar Grove in the Sequoia National Monument, within Kings Canyon National Park. It lies beneath the 2,000-foot-high marble walls of the Kings Gates. The location is not as well-known as Crystal Cave and is in a less congested area.

Tours are offered through an outside concessioner and individual tickets need not be purchased in advance.

There is a steep five-minute walk to the cavern, but otherwise the tour is not considered strenuous and is family-oriented toward children and seniors. Up to 40 people may attend any given tour which takes approximately 45 minutes and includes various rooms within the cavern.

Visitors may see a variety of stalactites and stalagmites as well as crystalline helictites and speleothems included in the Pancake Room and the Upside Down City.

For more information regarding Crystal Cave, visit http://www.visitsequoia.com/crystal-cave.aspx

For more information regarding Boyden Cave, visit http://www.visitsequoia.com/Tours-Boyden-Cave.aspx

Tucked deep in Sequoia National Park, Silver City Mountain Resort offers guests an authentic mountain experience away from the hustle and bustle of the main tourism.

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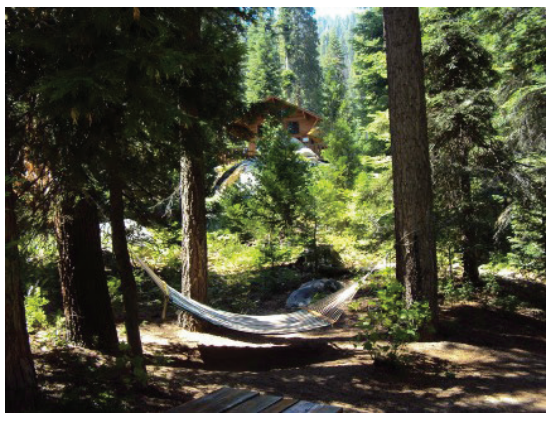

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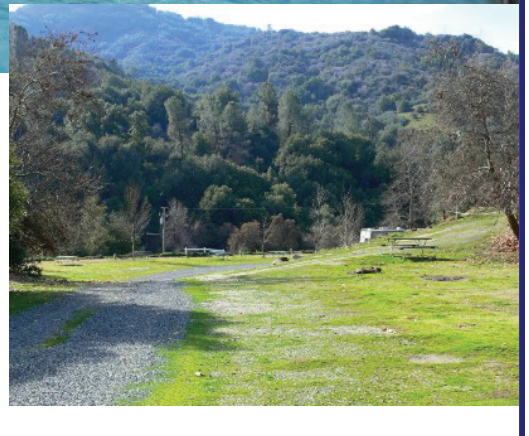

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Parks

Continued from p. I

there are some that are specifically aimed at children. There is also a Junior Ranger program. Be sure to check scheduling or ask for more information at a visitor's center.

In Yosemite there is also a Yosemite Valley Floor tour in an open-air tram during the summer season and an enclosed bus during the winter. Through this two-hour tour, park rangers introduce visitors to some of the most popular site-seeing areas, while describing wildlife, history, geology and more. During the summer, these tours depart from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Pre-registration is highly recommended. The cost for this is $25/adult; $23/senior; $15/children, 5-12 years of age; children under 5 are free. There are family discounts available.

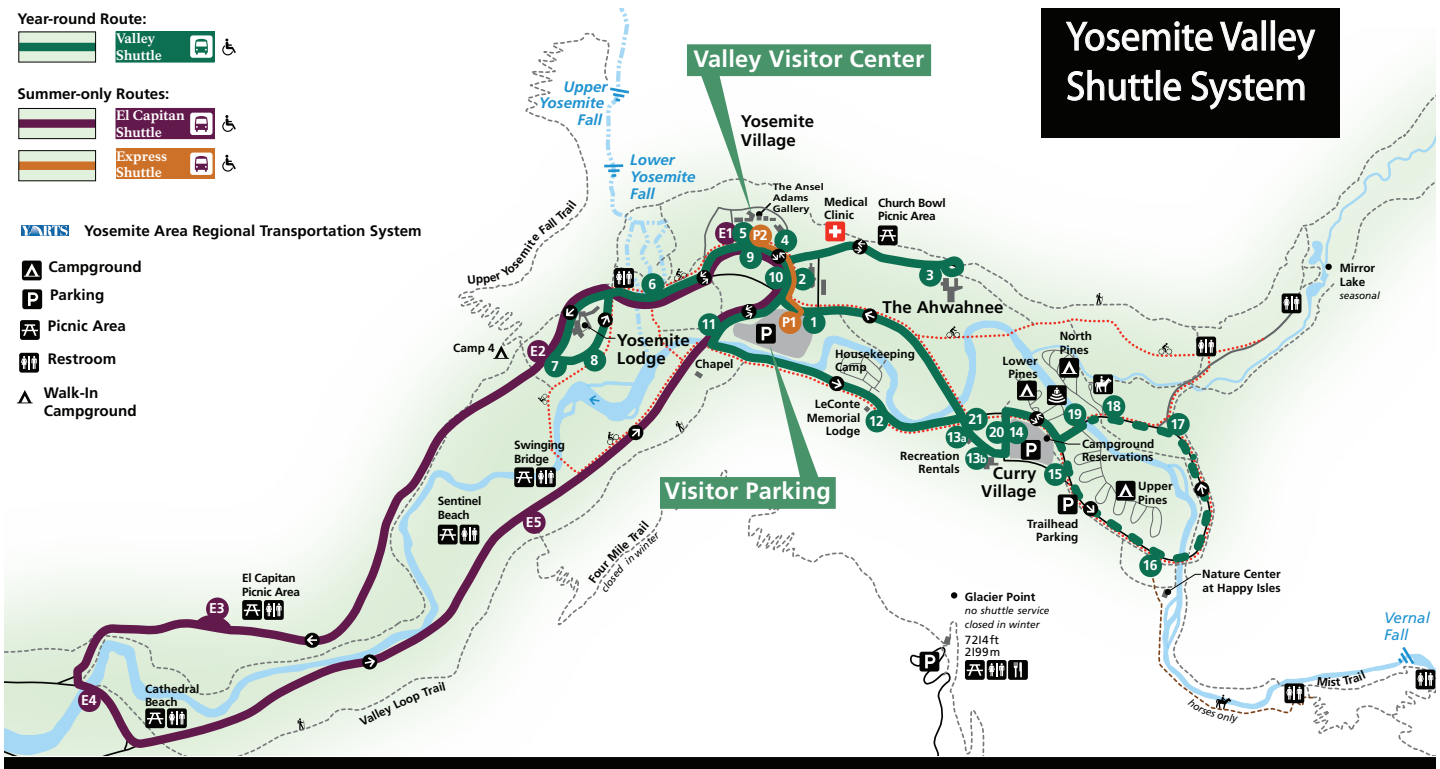
Each park has its own Create Art in the Parks series. These are workshops, generally held over a few days' period that may include sketching, painting, photography and writing. Please visit each park's website to learn more about their workshops. Pre-registration is required.

Each park also hosts its own Dark Sky Festival, also a workshop over a number of days. During this time, an area of each park is kept in the dark. Days and evenings are packed with events. These include constellation talks, astronaut talks, photography, nature walks and searching for aliens.

Within Yosemite, the Ansel Adams Gallery offers one-day photography classes and multi-day workshops. There are run through the Gallery, a concessioner of the National Park Service.

Now it is easier than ever to get from one area of Yosemite or Sequoia to another, whether for ranger-led walks, or to view sites on your own, Dierkes said.

Yosemite has its own shuttle system with three different lines including an express shuttle within the busiest area of the Yosemite Village. Taking the shuttles is free and encouraged as it cuts down on congestion and pollution within the park.



Yosemite Valley Shuttle System.

Likewise, the Sequoia Shuttle offers five in-park routes, each including its own destinations within the park. This shuttle service, within the park, is also free.

Each park also has bus service from various locations within the Valley up into the park, with admission included in the service fee. Sequoia Shuttle offers service from Visalia, Exeter and Three Rivers into the park for $15/passenger roundtrip.

YARTS offers bus service from Fresno, Merced, Sonora and Mammoth into Yosemite. Pricing varies upon location of pick-up. Roundtrip from Fresno into the park is $20.

Entrance fee to Sequoia & Kings Canyon is $20 per car, for a 7-day period, or $10 for those on foot, bicycle or motorcycle. An annual pass to the two parks is $30 per vehicle (valid for one year from time of purchase). Military members and those who qualify for volunteer passes receive a free pass.

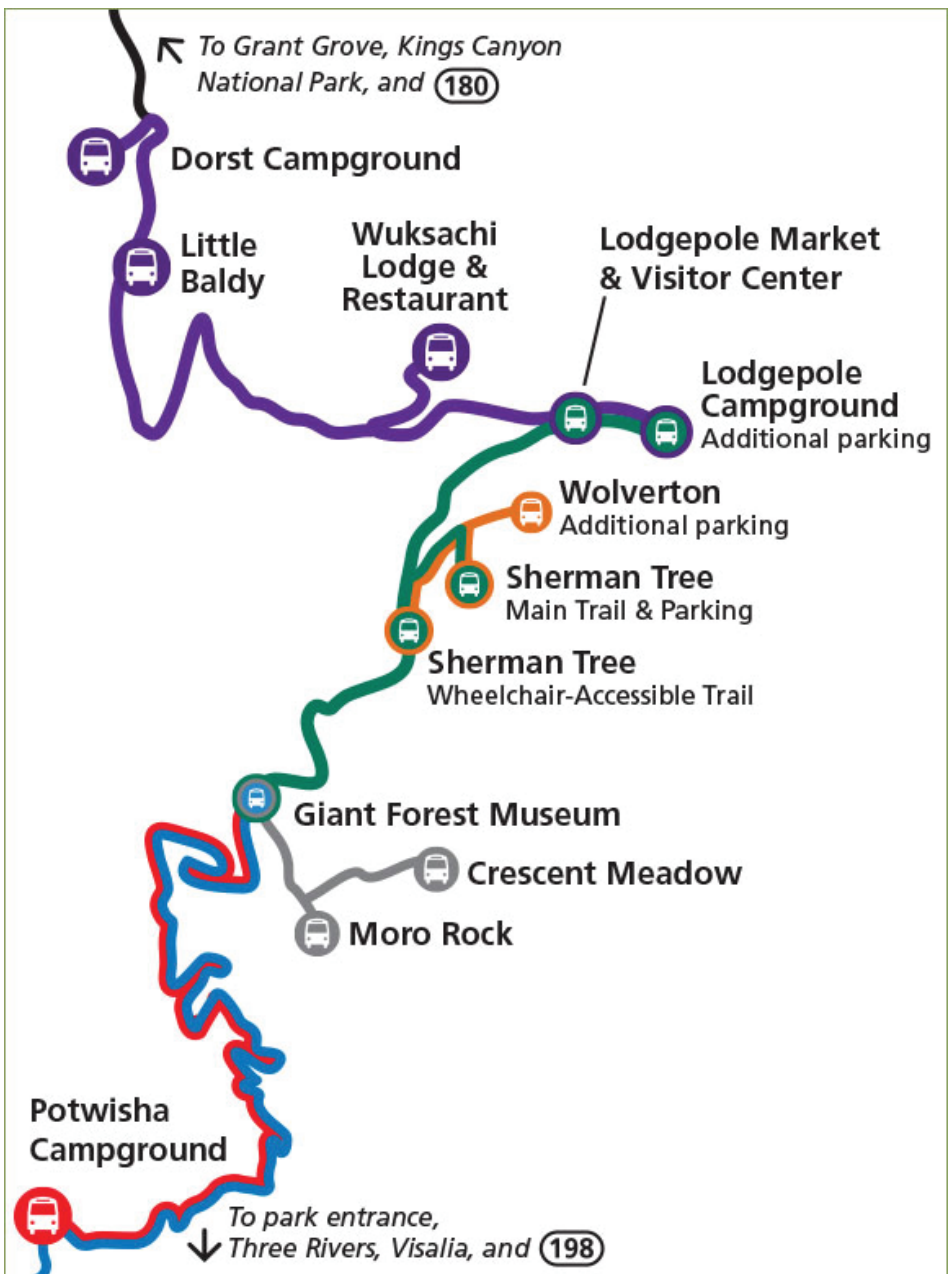
Entrance fee to Yosemite is $30 per car for a 7-day period and $15 those on foot. An annual pass to Yosemite is $60. Those in the military receive a free pass.

The America the Beautiful pass is available at any National Park for $80 and gives annual admission to all national parks.

An Interagency Senior Pass is available at any park for seniors 62 or older for $10. This is a lifetime pass with entry into any National Park or Monument.

Children under the age or 16 receive free admittance to any National Park.

For more information on Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, visit http://www.nps.gov/seki/index.htm



The Sequoia Shuttle.

Valley Voice
Valley Scene

Local Dancer Amanda Hart Returns for May 23 Performance and Master Dance Class

Hart Pulse Dance Company in motion.

Staff Reports

Celebrating its ninth year of contemporary dance, Hart Pulse Dance Company is hitting the road with a traveling show featuring its most loved works and a world premiere! With a four-city California tour that launched in March, heads to Director Amanda Hart's hometown of Visalia for a 7:30pm performance at the Visalia Fox Theatre on May 23. After a June 27 show in San Francisco at ODC Dance Commons, their final performance will be back on their home stage at The Miles Playhouse in Santa Monica on August 29 in the midst of their ninth Annual MixMatch Dance Festival.

Recognized by the *New York Times* this past August and voted LA's Top Dance Show by *LA Weekly* newspaper, Hart Pulse Dance Company is known for its dynamic partnering, beautiful storytelling and addictive musical choices.

Hart Pulse Dance Company's 2015 California Tour will offer company-taught master classes the day of each performance and post-show mingling so dancers and audiences alike can get to know its dancers and director. This tour is guaranteed to move you, impress you, and leave you wanting more!

Hart's early training began with the Sierra Performing Arts Center in Visalia. The Lindsay High School graduate, was accepted into The Fresno Ballet Company during her last year of high school. Hart has earned numerous accolades for her dance performances and now directs her own dance company and was recently appointed board chair of the Dance Resource Center of Los Angeles.

Hart Pulse Dance is excited to not only be bringing its love for exciting and soulful dance to new audiences, but also to be sharing the stage with local dance companies and artists in each city along the way.

Hart Pulse Dance Company recently wrapped their first performance in Santa Barbara at Center Stage Theater and

Val Martinez Headlines TC Symphony Fundraiser June 6 at Visalia Country Club

Kimberly Schafer

The Tulare County Symphony League's youth music education programs support hundreds of students countywide, providing scholarships and student orchestra opportunities.

Annually, the League awards emerging musicians scholarships for private lessons and hosts the Lorraine Burtner Young Artist Scholarship competition in which students perform their own selections to compete for a scholarship.

Val Martinez

Last October, the League launched a new initiative to provide violin instruction to 50 4th and 5th grade students at Crowley Elementary School in Visalia. The City of Visalia awarded the League with a grant to help provide the seed money to purchase violins specifically for the program.

The after-school program, which the League offers at no cost to the students, provides 30-minute group lessons twice weekly. In these ways, the Symphony League strives to fulfill its mission to "provide support for the development of young musicians through education, competition and performance".

The Symphony League also provides annual support to the Tulare County Symphony Orchestra. The League welcomes the community to support their efforts at their fundraiser "Music Movies & Moonlight" at the Visalia Country Club on Saturday, June 6 beginning at 6 p.m. Stan Taffell, three-time EMMY winner, and Bruce Kiesling, Music Director of the Symphony Orchestra, will emcee the evening, which includes dinner and entertainment by Val Martinez, who toured with Frankie Valli as one of the 4 Seasons.

Martinez will perform music from *Jersey Boys* as well as other favorites from the 1950s and 1960s.

Martinez has performed all over the world, including such places as Japan, Italy, France, Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean, New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas.

He has worked with such greats as Dick Clark, Julio Iglesias, Bobby Rydell, Edgar Winter, Wayne Brady, The Beach Boys, and K.C. and the sunshine band.

Martinez is currently touring with his hit show, *Walk Like A Man*, and working on solo projects at home in Los Angeles.

The event also includes a silent auction and a wine opportunity drawing in which one guest will carry home a sizeable collection of quality wine.

For more information, please call (559) 732-1343.

The Doobie Brothers

Doobie Brothers Show a Homecoming for Visalia Rocker

Dave Adalian

When the Doobie Brothers "Long Train Runnin'" pulls into Lemoore the night of Thursday, June 4 at the Tachi Palace, founding member and Visalia native Tom Johnston, his distinctive voice and guitar styling, will be up front for the homecoming performance.

The rocker, who turns 67 this year, and his band haven't slowed down much. Currently "Takin' It to the Streets" in the southeast, the band received the Voice of Music Award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers at a ceremony last month. The band then performed a series of concerts, including a performance at Music City Roots in Franklin, Tenn.

"He's in Nashville right now," said Johnston's brother Dave Johnston, who still resides not far from the home where he and his brother grew up.

Musical Rebellion

Tom Johnston's musical career began in the Visalia school system, where he played the clarinet and saxophone before turning his talents to the guitar.

"That was pretty much a rebellion trip. But, I hated that damned clarinet," Johnston told Guitar Player Magazine in a 1976 interview. The guitar held an allure he found he couldn't resist. "I learned all by ear. Never had a guitar lesson in my life, though I did learn how to play barre chords from a cat that took me aside when I said I didn't know how."

Visalia Roots Music

While his solo efforts and his work with the Doobie Brothers are his most well-known, that wasn't his first foray into Visalia's musical landscape. Johnston's "Give Me Justice", which he performed with a group called The Implicits, was released as a 45 by BMI in 1965. The band played several shows in Visalia, Woodlake, Hanford and Tulare.

"I was the rhythm guitar for the Implicits at the time the record was recorded," said former band member Jerry Hull said in an interview with garagehangover.com. "The original Implicits were Tom Johnston, lead guitar and vocal, Jerry Hull, rhythm guitar and vocal, Jack Love, bass guitar and vocal, Bobby Duarte, keyboard and vocal, and Kenny Henard, drums."

How to Attend

When the Doobies take the stage in Lemoore, Johnston will be joined by the band's co-founder, guitarist and vocalist Pat Simmons, and the band's long-time guitarist John McFee.

Tickets for the show, available at www.tachipalace.com, start at $45. VIP packages that include prime seating, a chance to meet the band and an array of Doobie Brothers-themed gear, are also available starting at $160.

Doors for the June 4 concert open at 6 p.m., with the show starting at 7:30. The Tachi Palace is located at 17225 Jersey Ave. in Lemoore.

Information: (866) 472-5223.

Two New Exhibits Open at Kings Art Center

John Robinson

YOSEMITE RENAISSANCE XXX

As the Kings Art Center's curator is it always exciting to see what works of art, from the many international entries, have been selected for this exhibit.

Beside the paintings and photographs that reflect our standard view of Yosemite, there are always those that, because of their interpretation of the landscape and innovative use of materials bring to us a new and fresh perspective of Yosemite and the Sierra.

Portrait of Shelly

Instead of paintings of Sugar Pine trees, we get a contemporary use of the bark and needless from the tree. Such interpretations always makes receiving the work an exciting experience, and it seems to have the same effect on those who view the exhibit as this remains one of our yearly favorites.

This year, Yosemite Renaissance is celebrating its 30th year with an exhibit of 49 paintings, photographs, prints and sculptures by 45 artists.

Drawn from 750 entries, this exhibit includes a broad range of works from the representational to the abstract, all interpreting the majesty of Yosemite and the Sierra.

The goals of Yosemite Renaissance are to bring together the works of contemporary artists that do not simply duplicate traditional representations, to establish a continuum with past generations of Yosemite artists, and to help re-establish visual art as a major interpretive medium of the landscape and a stimulus to the protection of the environment. Historically, the arts have played a major role in the establishment of our parks.

It is the hope of Yosemite Renaissance that they can be just as important in future efforts to preserve protect and expand our parks.

The artists included in Yosemite Renaissance XXX are: Kathy Adams/Joanne Baeth/Louise Page, Trowzers Akimbo, Gary Billingsley, Gerald G. Bosworth, Lorraine Bubar, Jenni Buczko, Ginny Burdick, Corinne Carbone, Chi-Han Cheng, Dennis Curry, Ratindra Das, Marianne Elliott, Sandy Follett, Franka Gabler, Charlotte Gibb, Jeff Grandy, Vicki Gunter, Carolyn Hartling, Phil Hawkins, Tony Hertz, David Hoffman, Peggy Huff, Tom Killion, Bruce Klein, Kerik Kouklis, Kristal Leonard, Kenneth McBride, G Dan Mitchell, Michael Mudd, Glenn Nelson, Lorraine Nelson, Yvonne Newhouse, Ted Orland, Penny Otwell, Elizabeth Paganelli, Pokey Park, Ann Piersall, Nancy Robbins, Susan Scott, George Smith, Mary Sweet, Mike Tauber, Kelly Viss, Melissa Woodburn and Floy Zittin.

Zuni Indian Maiden

ELLEN MILINICH,
Portraiture in Charcoal
In the Members Gallery

Visalia artist and Kings Art Center member Ellen Milinich presents more than 20 of her charcoal portraits in this retrospective exhibit.

Well-known for her charcoal portraits, she continues to work primarily from commissions. However, she always looks forward to those opportunities that allow her to work purely from the imagination. This exhibit combines both commissioned portraits and work from the imagination.

For Milinich, the blending of black and white chalk to create the many shades of gray required to achieve the perfect amount of depth in her portraits is the challenge and the reward.

Although primarily self-taught, her father was Professor of Art at Monterey Community College and their home environment was filled with art books and materials.

"My family were all creative people," she said.

Please enjoy these two exhibits and when possible, support our continued efforts to bring outstanding exhibits and art classes to the community. Check our website at www.kingsartcenter.org for a schedules of classes and exhibitions.

The Kings Art Center is located at 605 N. Douty, Hanford. Hours are Wednesday-Friday, 11am-4pm; Saturday, 12-3pm.

For more information, visit www.kingsartcenter.org

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What's Happening at
TACHI PALACE HOTEL & CASINO

The Doobie Brothers
THURSDAY, JUNE 4TH
Doors Open at 6PM
Showtime at 7:30PM
Located at the Bingo Hall
Tickets are $45, $65, $85

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Education

Tulare County Office of Education Announces Countywide Excellence in Education Winners

Tulare County Office of Education

A selection committee of Tulare County business and educational leaders met recently to review the Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year and School Employee of the Year nominations for 2015. The Excellence in Education Awards program, now celebrating its 22nd year, honors "the best of the best" in the three educational categories. A total of 25 nominations were received this year from Tulare County school districts. Each nomination was reviewed and scored individually by every member of the selection committee.

"The winners are innovators dedicated to student engagement and success," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "Each of these creative individuals have designed and fostered innovative programs to help students meet their greatest potential."

Once the selection committee reviewed each nomination and the scores were tallied, Vidak visited each of the winners to inform them of their award. The winners in the 2015 Excellence in Education program are:

WINNERS

Administrator of the Year: Leticia Trevino, Principal, Palm Elementary School, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District

Palm Elementary principal Leticia Trevino is described by her nominators as an "Energizer Bunny" – a woman with boundless energy for her students, staff and parents. She is also praised as a visionary leader who carefully monitors the progress of each of the 700 students on her campus. Trevino truly believes failure is not an option and that her role is to lead the charge for all students to succeed. She is credited for being the first principal to implement the district's Instructional Rounds program, a self-analysis process which is credited for the school's academic success. At Palm Elementary, students who are falling behind in the quarterly benchmarks are provided with an intervention instruction program that she instituted.

District Superintendent Yolanda Valdez reports that Trevino understands that in order to have a successful educational system, parents must partner with the school.

"She has implemented the Latino Literacy Parent Education System that has already graduated two classes," Valdez said. "She has also implemented monthly California State Standards Parent Education Nights. Parents participate in lessons, gaining insight into the ways students are learning math and English Language Arts."

Trevino has also implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports program, a school wide Code of Conduct, and a culture of scholarly learning.

Trevino led her staff and students as they transitioned from the 1997 California content standards to the new Common Core State Standards. During this process, she learned alongside her teachers about both English Language Arts and mathematics in order to provide guidance and assistance. On a daily basis, Trevino can be found with her walkie-talkie in hand, visiting each classroom, interacting with students or leaving observational notes on teachers' desks.

Tanya Goosev, the district's assistant superintendent of curriculum and program improvement said, "At any given moment, Leticia can tell you exactly where students are in their learning progression and how their teacher is monitoring student learning. She is a true 'leader of learning' and keeps a daily pulse on how teachers are teaching and how students are responding. She is also a professional at gathering data evidence of student learning and working with her team to implement a response to instruction and intervention."

"I continually remind adults of the servant roles we all have," Trevino said. "When selecting the admirable profession of teaching, we take on a major commitment of molding future generations academically and socially."

Prior to her assignment at Palm Elementary, Leticia Trevino served as the principal at several of the district's alternative education high schools.

WINNERS continued on **24 »**

VUSD's Water Management & Conservation

Craig Wheaton, Ed.D., Superintendent

We are clearly in a serious drought. This year has been four times drier than the driest year on record! I think we are all aware that we are in a four-year drought cycle that has accelerated an already depleting supply of ground water. The Governor and legislature have taken actions to respond to the drought and put in place long-term ground water management plans. So, the question might be, "What is VUSD doing about this?"

We have a long record of improving our water consumption. If you go back just a few years, we invested in automatic irrigation and that was a smart investment. Before, we were moving "sprinkler kickers" by hand to turn on water in many of our large field and playground areas. This took manpower and did not allow us to water at night--or efficiently. We are now automated at most schools and can control when and how much we water. This was the first big step in conserving water.

We are very aware of the need to conserve water. We meet with city staff members monthly, and water management is high on our agenda. We are working closely to ensure that the school district's water management plan is in alignment with the City of Visalia. We realize that the most recent changes will require us to reduce our water use by over 30 percent. This is a difficult but necessary task.

We have taken this seriously. During the last month, our staff visited every school to analyze water usage practices and field space needs, and we are developing a plan for each individual school. One of our main concerns is to keep green fields for safe play for our students. Safety is our first concern, and we believe that can be achieved at the same time we meet the necessary reduction rates.

So, join in and help us save water!

Calendar

CONTINUOUS

Every Third Tuesday, Monthly: The League of Women Voters of Tulare County meets, 11:45am
Enjoy lunch and a discussion at Sue Sa's Club House, 699 W. Center in Visalia. A fixed price luncheon for $13.00 inc. tax and tip will be served. The public is welcome. Reservations are required by calling 734-6501.

1st and 3rd Thursdays: Central Valley Tea Party Meetings, 6pm
819 West Visalia Road, Farmersville.

Through June 4: Women of Tulare County
This exhibit showcases these extraordinary women of Tulare County from 1855 to the present through a series of posters. Women featured include Josephine Allensworth, Anna Mills Johnston, Eleanor Calhoun, Ina Stiner, Annie Mitchell, Mary Garcia Pohot, Rose Ann Vuich, Jean Shepard, Lali Moheno, and Ester Hernandez. This exhibit is on the second floor of the Visalia Branch of the Tulare County Library outside of the Annie R. Mitchell History Room through June 4 and be. Exhibit hours are from 1--5pm, Tuesday--Friday. For more information on this exhibit, please contact Lisa Raney at 713-2723 or the reference desk at 713-2703. The Visalia Library is located at 200 W. Oak Ave, Visalia, CA 93291.

Through June: Visalia Branch Library Teen Homework Center, 3-6:30pm
The Visalia Branch Library offers a place for teens to do their homework Tuesdays through Fridays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak St.

Through June: Tulare Public Library Homework Help
Homework help for children in grades K-12 will be available in the Tulare Public Library Learning Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and Saturdays from 1-4pm.

Through October 28: Free Fly Casting Instruction, 6-7pm
Kaweah Fly Fishers are offering fly casting lessons at Del Lago Park in Tulare every Wednesday evening until October 28. Rods and reels will be supplied or you may bring your own.

MAY

May 1-29: Expressions of Lived Experience Art Show, 4-8pm
Mental health consumers with "The No Stigma Speakers Bureau" share their stories at 5:30pm, and the art reception begins at 6:30pm at the Arts Consortium, 400 N. Church, Visalia. The art show is open to the public all month long.

May 21: California Water Service Water Awareness Month Festival, 4 to 7pm
At the Garden Street Plaza.

May 21: "Night of Giving" at Hanford's Thursday Night Market Place, 5:30-9pm
Celebrate volunteerism with the music of Rockville (classic rock)

May 21: Special Tea Party Meeting, 6pm
Special guest speakers include Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux and DA Tim Ward. Tulare Masonic Lodge 135 W. Tulare Ave, Tulare, CA 93274 info -Michele Moore 688-4323

May 22: Espinoza Paz, 8pm
At Eagle Mountain Casino. Must be at least 18 to attend. For information call 800 903-3353.

May 23: Hart Pulse Dance Company, 7:30pm
Celebrating its ninth year of contemporary dance, Hart Pulse Dance Company is hitting the road with a traveling show featuring its most loved works and a world premiere. At the Visalia Fox Theatre.

May 24: Kids Safety Awareness Day, Noon-5pm
Fun for the whole family sponsored by Kings Martial Arts Academy. For information call (559) 572-9914 or (559) 836-2462.

May 25: Pizza with a Purpose, 5-9pm
Enjoy a great meal & support a great cause! Every #lastmonday of the month in 2015. The Planing Mill will donate a portion of the evening's revenue to the VRM!

May 26: 50th Anniversary Celebration, 5-9pm
The academics and staff at the UC-ANR Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center invites you to attend a celebration. We greatly appreciate your support of the Center over the years and we look forward to a rich future addressing critical research and extension needs to help maintain California's position as the top agricultural state in the U.S. and the world. If you plan to attend, please RSVP at http://ucanr.edu/KearneyRSVP.

May 27: Ribbon Cutting at St Anthony's Retreat, 11am
The Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce along with the Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host a Ribbon Cutting at the property located at 43816 Sierra Drive. We will be offering tours of our facility and light refreshment. Please join us as we showcase our beautiful property in the heart of the Sierra Nevada Foothills. (We are Just a short 35 minutes up the hill). Please RSVP to the email below or contact anna@visaliachamber.org or armonda@mytkhcc.org. Visit our website at www.stanthonyretreat.org or call 559-561-4595 for more information or directions.

May 27: Employee and Independent Contractor Definitions, 12pm- 1pm
This joint webinar with the Employment Development Department (EDD) will focus on understanding the differences between a common law employee and an independent contractor. You will learn the common misconceptions about independent contractors and receive information to help classify workers appropriately.

May 27: Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) information night, 6-7pm
The Visalia Chambers of Commerce will host a Young Entrepreneurs Academy(YEA!) information session at 220 N. Santa Fe St., Visalia for students currently in grades 7-12, their families, and local business leaders about YEA!--a yearlong program that guides middle and high school students through launching and running their own real businesses or social movements!

May 28: "Baseball Fever Night" at Hanford's Thursday Night Market Place, 5:30-9pm
Support you favorite team jersey with the music of Glen Delpit and Subterraneans (American roots)

May 29: Date Night: A Taste of Italy, 6:30pm
Spend an evening learning to create the favorite flavors of Italy with your partner. Cooking together is an intimate experience, and the most romantic flavors to taste together are the ones from Italy. Bring your camera and take advantage of Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch, a ibeautiful venue that is filled with romantic photo opportunities. Whether it's a new love or you're forever in love, this fun, interactive date night on the farm, which will bring you closer as you explore the tastes of Italy together. You will learn how to make gnocchi, limoncello, tiramisu, and more. Cost: $100 per couple.

May 29: Rawhide Baseball Game, 7pm
Through a partnership with the Visalia Rawhide, Mental Health Awareness will be highlighted for the fourth year in a row at the ballpark.

May 29 & 30: Rockin through the Ages Casino Night, 7pm-Midnight
Golden State Family Services presents Rockin through the Ages Casino Night at the Visalia Elks Lodge, 3100 West Main St. in Visalia. You must be over 21 to attend. Tickets are $30 per person. Golden State Family Services is a nonprofit benefitting local foster children. For more information, call (559) 687-1173.

May 30: 18th Annual Chile Verde Golf Tournament, 9am
The Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is holding their 18th Annual Chile Verde Golf Tournament on May 30 at the beautiful Ridge Creek Golf Course in Dinuba. This will be a 4-man scramble tournament with a shotgun start at 9am. Cash prizes awarded along with a new car for a hole in one sponsored by ED DENA'S AUTO SALES. Other prizes include sparkling DIAMOND jewelry sponsored by QUALITY JEWELERS VISALIA'S JEWELRY MART. A delicious Chile Verde dinner with all the fixings will be served after the tournament. Raffle prizes and LOTS OF FUN! FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL the Chamber office at 559-734-6020.

May 30: USAC West Coast 360 Sprints
USAC West Coast 360 Sprints, USAC Western Midgets, Western RaceSaver Sprints and Vintage Cars will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

May 30: Michael Crile, 6pm
Michael Crile, a classically trained vocalist, will perform at a 6pm dinner concert at the Spiritual Awareness Center. Local restaurants are donating dinner and desserts for the event, which is a fund raiser for the center. Tickets are $35 and can be purchased through the Spiritual Awareness Center at 117 S. Locust, Visalia, or by calling 625-2441 Monday through Thursday 9:30-3:30.

Once again the Sound N Vision Foundation has teamed up with Visalia Arts Consortium, Visalia Community Arts Grants, and Visalia Boys & Girls Club to offer FREE youth music and art classes. Classes will be held at Boys & Girls Club (215 W Tulare Ave, Visalia). Guitar, drumming, and visual art classes are being taught by professional artists and musicians. Classes fill up fast, so email or call Stephanie Gomes today for free registration: (559) 331-0009 or stephaniemgomes@gmail.com

Painting and Screen Printing Art: This class will be a project-based overview of basic art concepts including painting and screen printing.

Class dates: **JUNE 16, 17,18, 22, 24,**

May 31: Southern Gospel music concert, 6pm
The First Baptist Church of Dinuba is pleased to be hosting a concert on May 31 featuring "Keepers Of The Faith Ministry". KOTF is a nationally known quartet from the state of Washington who has become a "Fan Favorite" wherever they go. Free admission! A free-will offering will be taken for the ministry of KOTF. For more information, please call Dennis

at (559) 643-0676.

JUNE

June 4: The Doobie Brothers, 6pm
When the Doobies take the stage in Lemoore, Johnston will be joined by the band's co-founder, guitarist and vocalist Pat Simmons, and the band's long-time guitarist John McFee. Tickets for the show, available at www.tachipalace.com, start at $45. VIP packages that include prime seating, a chance to meet the band and an array of Doobie Brothers-themed gear, are also available starting at $160.

26 (10:00-11:30am) *All materials will be provided. (ages 8-17)

Drum Rhythms of the World: This class will utilize conga drums to teach traditional drum rhythms used around the world.

Class dates: **JULY 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 29, 31** *(10:30-11:30am) *Drums will be provided. (ages 8-17)*

Electric Guitar Jam Basics: This class teaches basic electric guitar and popular riffs. Students will be encouraged to improvise on the instrument and play together.

Class dates: **JULY 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 29, 31** *(12:00-1:00pm) *Instruments and amps will be provided. (ages 8-17)*

Doors for the June 4 concert open at 6 p.m., with the show starting at 7:30. The Tachi Palace is located at 17225 Jersey Ave. in Lemoore.

June 5: Blues, Brews & BBQ, 6-10pm

June 6 – July 18: Yosemite Renaissance XXX
Originating in Yosemite, this annual juried exhibit celebrates its 30th year by presenting over 50 works of art covering a wide range of media with a diverse interpretation of Yosemite and the Sierra's. Regular gallery hrs: Wed-Fri 11-4 PM / Sat-Sun 12-3 PM Free admission / Tours by appointment Information: 1-559-584-1065 Location: Kings Art Center, 605 N. Douty St. Hanford, CA. 93230

June 6- July 18: The Drawings of Ellen Milinich
Local artist Ellen Milinich presents over 20 charcoal portraits in this retrospective exhibit. Regular gallery hrs: Wed-Fri 11-4 PM / Sat-Sun 12-3 PM Free admission / Tours by appointment Information: 1-559-584-1065 Location: Kings Art Center, 605 N. Douty St. Hanford, CA. 93230

June 8: TKRL Darrel Waterman Memorial 14th Annual Golf for Life Tournament, 10:30am
The 4-person shot-gun scramble represents a major fundraising event for Tulare-Kings Right To Life. Entry fee is $150 per person, which entitles the participant to 18 holes of golf on one of Central California's finest courses, plus a light lunch and a catered dinner at the VCC clubhouse. Check-in begins at 10:30 a.m. with tee-off at 12:00noon. For information about Sponsor Packages and/or Registration Forms, contact April Kesterson at 732-5000, or visit www.tkrl.org.

June 11: Veterans Aid and Attendance Workshop, 6- 7:30pm
Veterans can earn up to $25,022 of tax-free income per year to pay for assistance with activities of daily living. Find out more by attending this free event. Guest speaker is Gilbert Fleming, Elder Law Attorney. For additional information or to RSVP, call 624-3503. Quail Park is located at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia.

June 13: "Just Walk" With a Doc, 8-9am
The Healthy Visalia Committee working in partnership with Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Family HealthCare Network, Tulare County Medical Society and the Visalia Parks and Recreation Dept. continues its 2015 Visalia's "Just Walk" With a Doc walking program. The walks will take place at Blain Park, 3101 S. Court St., in Visalia.

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June 13: Kings Lions Brewfest, 5-9pm
Beer tasting--and food!--at the Kings Lions complex (Hwy 198 &19th) 100% of the proceeds go to local/community charities. Tickets are $35 for the 21+ event. For more information call (559) 924-4417.

June 13: Summer Latin Jam, 8pm
Eagle Mountain Casino welcomes El Chicano, MC Magic, Amanda Perez, Lighter Shade of Brown, Tierra and Malo on Saturday June 13th for an all-inclusive concert at 8pm. Tickets are on sale now and start at only $30.

June 18: Visalia Chamber of Commerce 2015 Annual Awards Celebration, 6-9:30pm
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce 2015 Annual Awards celebration honoring Man, Woman and Businesses of the Year will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. Tickets are $70.00 each or a table of 8 for $520.00

June 19 to 28: Heritage of America
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host a "Travel with the Chamber" trip, which includes airfare, 14 meals and a professional travel guide. Destinations include New York, Philadelphia, Amish Country, Gettysburg, Shenandoah Valley, Monticello, Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Washington, D.C. and the Smithsonian. For information, call 734-5876.

June 22 to 26: Yellowstone National Park Wildlife Safari
The Sequoia Natural History Association (SNHA) will hold an eco-tour of Yellowstone National Park. Reserve seats by calling 565-4222. For information, visit sequoiahistory.org.

June 24: Miss Devon & the Outlaw plus Krystyn Harris with Brook Wallace, 7pm
This is a rare opportunity to catch two acts in one for the same price. We are confident you'll enjoy this evening of wonderful Western music by four talented Texans. Bring out the kids too as they'll be no school in the morning. Call Mavericks at 559 624-1400 for tickets (Visa/MC) or better yet stop by for a cup of their almost world famous, freshly roasted coffee. Limited seating, doors open at 6 (open seating) show time at 7 PM.

June 27: Under the Streetlamp, 7:30pm
The Streetlamp will perform favorite Doo-Wop, Motown and old-time rock n' roll hits at the Visalia Fox Theatre, 300 Main St. For information, visit foxvisalia.org.

June 29: Pizza with a Purpose, 5-9pm
Enjoy a great meal & support a great cause! Every #lastmonday of the month in 2015. The Planing Mill will donate a portion of the evening's revenue to the VRM!

JULY

July 11: "Just Walk" With a Doc, 8-9am
The Healthy Visalia Committee working in partnership with Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Family HealthCare Network, Tulare County Medical Society and the Visalia Parks and Recreation Dept. continues its 2015 Visalia's "Just Walk" With a Doc walking program. The walks will take place at Blain Park, 3101 S. Court St., in Visalia.

July 12: Martina McBride: The Everlasting Tour, 7:30-9:30pm
Martina McBride returns to the Visalia Fox Theatre! A Rainmaker Productions event benefitting VRM. Tickets available vrmhope.org/events

July 19: 7th Annual Food Fight AGAINST Hunger, 3-6pm
Join the California Restaurant Association as they host the 7th Annual Food Fight AGAINST Hunger! All proceeds benefit the Visalia Rescue Mission. PRIZES! DELICIOUS food from local restaurants! LIVE MUSIC! COOKING DEMO by The Vintage Press' David Vartanian! AMATEUR CHEFS COMPETING FOR TOP HONORS in the cooking competitions! Must be 21 to attend. Visit www.vrmhope.org/events for ticket information.

July 22: Labor Law Compliance Series, 7-10am.
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with Pacific Employers, will present the state-mandated Supervisors' Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Seminar & Workshop at the Lamp Liter Inn. Registration & Breakfast 7:30-8 am; Seminar 8-10am. Reservations required. For more information call the Chamber, 734-5876.

July 25: 2nd Annual Peter Murphy Classic
King of the West 410, Sprint Car Series, USAC West Coast 360 Sprints and Western RaceSaver Sprints will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

July 27: Pizza with a Purpose, 5-9pm
Enjoy a great meal & support a great cause! Every #lastmonday of the month in 2015. The Planing Mill will donate a portion of the evening's revenue to the VRM!

AUGUST

August 8: "Just Walk" With a Doc, 8-9am
The Healthy Visalia Committee working in partnership with Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Family HealthCare Network, Tulare County Medical Society and the Visalia Parks and Recreation Dept. continues its 2015 Visalia's "Just Walk" With a Doc walking program. The walks will take place at Blain Park, 3101 S. Court St., in Visalia.

August 31: Pizza with a Purpose, 5-9pm
Enjoy a great meal & support a great cause! Every #lastmonday of the month in 2015. The Planing Mill will donate a portion of the evening's revenue to the VRM!

See more events online ourvalleyvoice.com

Sports

Orosi High School Booster Club Helping To Restore a Great Program

Stefan Barros

The Orosi High School Booster club is attempting to revive what was once a great athletic institution. An institution that once won a Valley Championship in every sport back in 1968.

The booster club is trying to re-establish interest in their high school athletic programs, but holding fundraisers, like the upcoming second annual Mark Millhorn/Ed Coats Golf Classic on Saturday. June 6. It will take place at the Ridge Creek Dinuba Golf Club.

The president of the booster club is Jon Smoljan, an Orosi High graduate. He wants to revive the greatness that the high school athletic programs once had and the golf classic is a great springboard for athletics and a great way to get the community involved, he said.

"We want to be able to make enough money to hold us over until the fall and football season," he said. "We also want to be able to get alumni involved in what we are doing here, that's most important, especially the younger alumni."

"We had 104 people compete in the first golf classic. It raised $6,000 and helped pay for 200 plates at the football kickoff dinner and the new scoreboards at the football stadium," Smoljan said.

A field dedication to Ed Coates was made prior to the golf classic, according to Smoljan. Coates, one of the names behind the golf classic, spent 36 years as a football coach at Orosi High and has spent 51 years in the school district.

The other name involved in the golf classic, George Millhorn, also attended Orosi High and went on to play baseball at Fresno State under legendary head coach Pete Biden.

He has been a school administrator for the past 36 years. The field dedication was on the football field at Orosi High at which time it was officially named Millhorn Stadium on Coates field.

Jon Smoljan

"The dedication really began to open the eyes of the community," Smoljan said. "It showed people that things are changing after not after having a booster club for 20 years. Having the backing from administration really helps with what we're doing."

The support that the booster club receives from the student-athletes, school administration and community really does make things easier according to Smoljan.

"It's been a lot of work, but the stars are aligned with the cooperation we've been getting from everyone," he said.

Another big fundraiser for the booster club was the cancer awareness softball game, held on April 28.

Smoljan said he was very pleased with how it turned out for the school.

"It was the first year we've done this, and it was a huge success," he said. "We had a lot of people involved in the game, both watching and on the field. The town is really good at supporting athletics. We were also able to give out t-shirts and the kids really seemed to like it."

"The support has definitely gotten better since the dedication at the football field. Everybody really wants to see this work, Smoljan said.

With the increased support from the community and the increased success with the athletics teams, Smoljan said the talented student-athletes are now less likely to go to school in nearby Dinuba, which had been a problem for Orosi athletics in the past.

"We want to make the kids feel like our program is the best. Now we know that's not true, but we want them to know that the program is getting better," he said.

Orosi High School went without a booster club from 1994 through 2014, when Smoljan stepped in.

He wants to regain what Orosi athletics once had, he said, and the best way to do that is in a motto that is being used around Orosi High and the booster club, "Dream big, work hard, give back."

According to Smoljan, there have been plenty of people that have played a big role in trying to restore Orosi athletics.

Those names include Anabel Rivas, Sam Villanueva, Leonard Hutchinson, Bobby Reyes, Lenny Encinas, Larry Banda, Art and Richard Yanez, Lyle Tashiro, Arnold Serna, Cecil Reed and Lenny Uyeg.

"These people have been here since day one helping us achieve our goals," he said.

For more information on the Mark Millhorn/Ed Coates Golf Classic, call Mark Millhorn, (559) 804-6263 or Jon Smoljan, (559) 799-9894.

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Golden Eagle Golfers Place High in State Championship Match

Two Golden Eagle golfers represented West Hills College Lemoore at the recent California Community College Athletic Association Men's Golf State Championship, with both players placing well.

Gareth Evans and Jordan Koelewyn played at the championship in Kingsburg, finishing in 4th place and 13th place respectively. Evans played well enough to make the All-State Team.

"Jordan and Gareth were awesome at the State Tournament," said Dave Neer, team coach. "Gareth had a great day, shooting even par for two rounds and making the state team. It's a fantastic accomplishment for him and West Hills."

Evans shot 144, winning the 4th place spot after a tie breaker and finishing six strokes behind the winner of the championship.

Koelewyn shot 145 and tied for 6th place but ended up in 13th place for the tournament following a tie breaker.

Evans and Koelewyn had been the only WHCL team members to qualify for the championship game.

Girls Volleyball Camp to be Held at McDermont Field House

Girls, age 12-18, are invited to join the NuBred SoCal Juniors Volleyball Camps at McDermont Field House in June.

Entrants will participate in skills clinics on Thursday and Friday, June 18-19 from 8:30-11am and 1-3pm. A Friendship Tournament will be held on Saturday, June 20 from 8:30am-12:30pm.

Girls at any ability level are welcome to attend. The camp is open to individuals and teams.

Individual registration is $60. Teams of 12 or less entry registration is $575. Entries include admission to the Field House for players, one adult and a camp t-shirt.

Paperwork is available at www.socal-jrsvbc.com or arrive 30 minutes prior to the first clinic for registration.

For more information, contact Job Lara, (562) 413-3444 or Micah Burpo, (562) 417-7937.

The McDermont Field House is located at 365 N. Sweetbriar, Lindsay.

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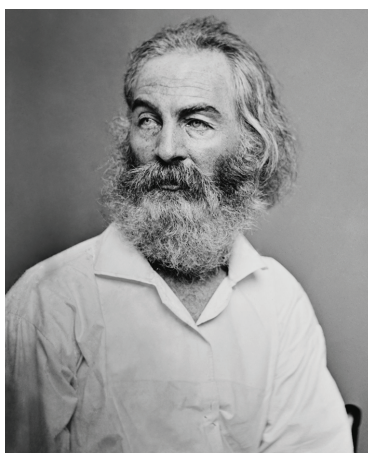
Great Conversations

"I Know What I am for": Walt Whitman and the Poet's Vocation

Joseph R. Teller

Walt Whitman (1803-1882) is often considered the most important American poet of the nineteenth century. His magisterial *Leaves of Grass*, first published in 1855 (followed by eight increasingly expanding editions), is a collection of lyric poems that, when taken as a whole, offers his vibrant and passionate vision of the American ethos.

The lyrics are innovative not only for their sweeping range of deeply "American" themes—from poems on the Civil War to songs about nature and everyday beauty, from the sublime "To a Locomotive in Winter" to the soaring "Song of Myself" and "Facing West From California's Shores"—but for their experimentation in free verse, poetry in which the only "rules" for a poem are the length of the line (rather than, say, meter, rhyme, or stanza). It is Whitman's marriage of democratic ideals and free verse that makes Whitman the quintessential American poet and a major influence on generations of American writers.



Walt Whitman

Recently, the Great Books group discussed one of Whitman's lyrics from *Leaves of Grass*, "Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking." The poem is spoken by a poet who reflects on an intense, formative childhood experience. The poet remembers "Two feather'd guests," birds from Alabama that built a nest near his home in Paumanok when he was a child, "When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing." One day, the female bird disappears.

Lamenting the loss of its mate, the male sings its forlorn song, which the poet "translates" and embeds in his poem. It is this act of translation, this almost prophetic work of expressing profound realities beneath the surface of things, which makes the speaker recognize and ultimately embrace his vocation as a poet. After "translating" the bird's song into human language, the poet relives his childhood epiphany in the climax of the lyric: "Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me? / For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you, / Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake, / And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder, and more sorrowful than yours, / A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die."

The poet, still recalling this childhood experience, concludes the poem by meditating on the undulating sea, whose rhythmically pounding waves represent mortality; the waves whisper the "low and delicious word death" to the poet, a word which becomes the speaker's lifelong inspiration.

In a culture in which poetry has become increasingly academic and sadly irrelevant to the general reader, reading Whitman can be tremendously refreshing. Our group not only thoroughly enjoyed the poem; they genuinely connected to it.

Many felt deep sympathy with the poem's depiction of mortality and loss, and especially with the poet's recognition that facing mortality often leads us to profound insights and to a deeper understanding of beauty. Others thought that the poem's dramatization of the cycle of birth and death was especially potent. Yet others were impressed with Whitman's poetic craftsmanship, noticing that the poet can create entire stanzas out of one sentence, piling up description upon description like gentle waves flooding over the reader.

Overall, though, and perhaps most importantly, our discussion inspired everyone to want to read more of *Leaves of Grass*—a testament both to Whitman's artistic powers and to our primal, human love for beauty.

Party at the Plaza 4th of July Fundraiser

On Saturday July 4th will host fundraiser for Mooney Grove Park. In partnership with Sequoia Beverage and Budweiser the entire Plaza Park is slated for this event

Slated is a beer garden, a battle of the bnks, bounce houses, live entertainment, food an lots of fun for all.

Vendor booths are available for individuals or organizations.

Zella Atwell will perform for the cause. Atwell is known for her Sunday night performances at Crawdaddy's on Main St. in Visalia.

Sponsorships are needed. Included will be advertising and booth space.

For vendor space, contact Event Coordinator Robert Ingham, 559-972-4570.

For Battle of the Bands and live entertainment, contact Ed Berry 559 -723-4097.

For Sponsors, questions and ideas, contact Mary Bryant at therealmgproject2014@yahoo.com

The Real Mooney Grove Project is a non-profit organization.

Kay Packard Debuts Book on Palm Reading

Catherine Doe

Last month Kay Packard, author of *Your Life is in Your Hands, Practical Palm Reading for Purposeful Living,* held two workshop/book signings; one in Hanford, and one in her old hometown of Three Rivers.

Packard said the most fun line to read is the heart line, and once you learn how to read it, you have just enough information to be dangerous. During her workshop she reviewed the four main types of heart lines so everyone could all go home and analyze our partners or kids.

Of the 24 people who attended the Hanford workshop, 21 had the "hermit" type of heart line. Packard said that "hermits" want to learn all about themselves and that is why they were there.

The three top reasons to buy Packard's book? It will save you a lot of money on therapy and ice cream. You can host a hand reading circle with your gal pals. Or, you can be the coolest person to sit next to at dinner parties. If you draw a blank after a guest plops their hand in front of you, tell them that their life line does not reveal how long they will live but the quality of their life. That will have them eating out of your palm for the rest of the night.

If you want to learn why your soul was put on this earth, or just want to be the life of the party, log on to Kay's website to order her book, http://handfactor.com/

If you are interested in taking one of Kay's hand analysis classes check out her web page at, http://www.academyofhandanalysis.org/about/

Michael Crile To Perform at Spiritual Awareness Center

Michael Crile, a classically trained vocalist, will perform a 6pm dinner concert on May 30 at Visalia's Spiritual Awareness Center.

Crile has been performing for audiences since the age of 14. He began his music education/career at Exeter Union High School, where he was part of the Tulare County Honor Choir. He continued his training at College of the Sequoias, where he earned his Associate of Arts in vocal music. Crile has performed throughout the state, including performing the national anthem at Visalia Rawhide games.

Tickets are $35 and can be purchased through the Spiritual Awareness Center at 117 S. Locust, Visalia, or by calling 625-2441.

Winners

Continued from p. 19

Teacher of the Year: Christopher Cumiford, History/Social Science Teacher, Visalia Technical Early College (VTEC) High School, Visalia Unified School District

Christopher Cumiford began his teaching career with Visalia Unified as an instructor at Charter Alternatives Academy, the district's community day school. He accepted an exceptionally difficult position working with academically challenged, expelled students, ranging from grades 7-12. He developed a system of instruction so supportive and engaging that his students showed the most significant gains in student test scores in the school.

At VTEC since 2010, Cumiford has shown an incredible ability to challenge high achieving students while motivating the low achievers. One of the ways he accomplishes this is with genuine passion he has about his subject matter. Cumiford is eager to share the excitement of history to such an extent that his enthusiasm is contagious.

VTEC Principal Victoria Porter said, "I would count Mr. Cumiford as one of the most intelligent, creative and inspiring instructors I know."

Cumiford teaches VTEC students in grades 9-12 with classes in Modern World History, United States History, Civics and Economics in a classroom that is best described as a 21st century museum. Music and artifacts from various ages mix with a three-screen projection system.

"Fostering student engagement is another core principle of my teaching philosophy," Cumiford said. "I accomplish this by providing students with a multi-sensory learning experience that gets them excited to learn. Through the use of multi-media, active field trips, and exposure to unique primary source historical documents, students gain a deeper appreciation for learning as part of engaging hands on experience."

Students entering his class are immediately engaged and immersed in the curriculum for the duration of the 120-minute block. Cumiford teaches using a "RECONEXCO" method he developed. RECONEXCO stands for comprehensive research, artistic conceptualize, authentic experience and innovative contribution.

"These steps are designed to activate critical thinking skills, foster an awareness for the interconnectedness of all subjects and develop a deeper appreciation for the past," he said. Cumiford divides his class into modules, with half the class working on interdisciplinary projects and the other half divided into cooperative groups that move from module to module every 10 minutes to examine primary documents or view a documentary relating to the curriculum. Then, midway through the block, the students switch. So effective are his innovative practices, that Cumiford was recruited this year as a presenter for the California Council for the Social Sciences.

Cumiford is an active participant in the Tulare County' Office of Education's showcase of project based learning practices known as "A Night at the 21st Century Museum." He is also active in National History Day – Tulare County and an adjunct History and Social Science Professor at Fresno Pacific University. Cumiford was selected as the 2015 Visalia Unified Teacher of the Year.

School Employee of the Year: Evelia "Eve" Alvarez, Office Manager/Guidance Associate, Kaweah High School, Exeter Unified School District

Eve Alvarez wears many hats at Kaweah High School, a continuation school in Exeter. Her principal, Darren Pace, said that while her title is Office Manager and Guidance Associate, she goes way beyond her job description to serve as the school's registrar, counselor, clerk, librarian, activities director, bilingual coordinator, student services director, ELD coordinator, parent liaison, testing coordinator and independent study coordinator for more than 100 students who attend the school. She also teaches a Reconnecting Youth class designed to build social resiliency skills in students.

Ethical and results-oriented, Alvarez has risen to the challenge of her position. She has demonstrated an unwavering consideration, capability and commitment to students at Kaweah High School. So committed, Alvarez recently completed her Master of Arts degree in Counseling and her Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credential so that she could better serve the students. At Kaweah High School, she is the "go-to" person for every student, staff and community member at our site.

According to Pace, her support and coordination of services has led to Kaweah High School receiving a Golden Bell Award and quickly becoming one of the highest achieving alternative schools in the Valley.

"Working within an environment where students have multiple needs and require disparate interventions provides me the greatest opportunity to stimulate the highest level of growth in academic achievement and personal success," Alvarez said. "I work with extended families, police, probation, mental health, children services, coaches, special education occupational therapy, community service providers and employers on a daily basis. The diverse conditions and challenges associated in working closely with the neediest students are more rewarding than I could have ever envisioned."

Although she could obtain a higher paying job in teaching with her PPS Credential, she said, "I have remained as an office manager because I discovered there is greater compensation than just a paycheck."

Alvarez is constantly meeting with students who otherwise would not have guidance at home. She routinely helps the staff deal with behavior issues and acts as a liaison to parents at home. She is able to effectively direct students and keep them on track throughout their academic school years and beyond. Students who have moved on to Exeter Union High School often come back to Kaweah to seek her advice. Without hesitation, she helps them understand what they are doing and why, and as they leave, both student and parents always praise her for all the support and guidance they received.

FINALISTS

Two finalists are selected in each of the three categories:

Administrator of the Year

Chris Meyer, Principal, Dinuba High School, Dinuba Unified School District

Jill Rojas, Principal, Visalia Adult School, Visalia Unified School District

Teacher of the Year

Christie Coday, Second Grade Teacher, Garden Elementary School, Tulare City School District

Michaelpaul Mendoza, World/U.S. Cultural History Teacher/Activities Director, Mission Oak High School, Tulare Joint Union High School District

School Employee of the Year

Glori Jones, Special Education Aide, Los Tules Middle School, Tulare City School District

Lorena White, Web Developer, Tulare County Office of Education